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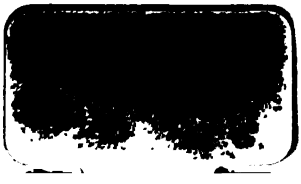
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# THE CARDINAL.

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VOL. II.

# THE CARDINAL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE DUCHESS,"

&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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# THE CARDINAL.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE CARDINAL.

We must transfer the scene to another part of Madrid.

The royal residence, at the period of our story, was a different building from that which is now the abode of the sovereigns of Spain. The palace which had witnessed the councils and the magnificence of Charles V. and his successors of the house of Austria, and which was still the dwelling place of the first of the Bourbon monarchs, was an edifice whose exterior possessed little claim to admiration. Originally a stronghold of the

Moorish kings, after it had fallen into the hands of the conquering descendants of Pelayo, it had been used by its new masters as a hunting-seat,—a purpose for which it was well qualified, from the immense forest which then clothed the country in its neighbourhood. It was this which first attracted to it the notice of Charles V., who deserted for it Valladolid; while his son Philip manifested even a stronger attachment to the spot, probably from the associations of early boyhood. At his hands the Moorish Alcazar received many additions and improvements, and became from that day the court residence.

Still, after all, there was little attractive. The front was a long unornamented pile, terminated at either end by a tower, and having a third in its centre, through which a gateway led to two courts in the interior. The extent of the structure invested it to a certain degree with that dignity which mere size seldom fails to confer; but beyond this there was nothing to admire, and the building bore evident traces of being the patch-

work construction of successive masters. The front itself was of stone, while the towers at either end were of brick; but even they were not finished. That towards the river terminated in a spire and gilt vane, somewhat in the style of the Renaissance; while its companions, on the contrary, in the centre and at the further end of the façade, though carried up as high as the top of the stone-work, had been left uncompleted, and were covered by a flat ungainly roof of tile and wood-work. The same slovenliness of character exhibited itself in the court-yard in front, which, though of immense size, was surrounded by buildings of the most paltry description, one story in height, and forming the barracks of the Spanish and Walloon Guard.

Towards the river the building had a more graceful character. That portion of it had been the work of its Moorish founders, and its numerous and irregular towers had all those claims to the picturesque which the Saracenic architecture generally bestows. Below, the ground sunk rapidly to the

Manzanares; the steep declivity being covered to the very edge of the water by forest timber and brushwood.

The interior of the palace, as we have already mentioned, consisted of two court-yards. That on the left, as you entered, and towards the river, contained the apartments of the royal family; and was surrounded by a double balcony, which formed the favourite lounge of a numerous tribe in Spain—the place-hunters. The court-yard on the right was appropriated to the ministers and other officials connected with the government.

It is to an apartment in the latter that we have now to conduct the reader.

The room was of large dimensions. Fire-place there was none, but its want was supplied by a brazier of ornamented iron-work, heaped with charcoal. The walls were covered with Moorish velvet, which, suspended from the roof in long and loose folds, draped the room all round, and rested on the floor. In one portion only the hangings were looped up, and left to view a massive door of

walnut-wood, furnished on the inside with bolts large and heavy enough to signify that danger was to be apprehended even in the halls of princes. In other respects the chamber was little decorated,—a solitary picture, a master-piece of Murillo, representing a martyred saint, being its only ornament. The rest of the furniture was of corresponding simplicity. On either side of the brazier, and at equal distances, stood large tables of walnut-wood, loaded with papers, while some high-backed chairs formed their accompaniments.

It was the afternoon of the day whose events we have chronicled in the last chapter. Beside one of the tables sat a man about fifty-six years of age. He was of low stature, with broad shoulders and short neck. The head was very large, the person stout, the complexion swarthy. The face was nearly square, the eye deep set, bold, and piercing; the forehead prominent and lofty, the mouth small and handsome, but, from the pressure of its lower jaw, showing indisputable evidence of decision. The general expression

of the countenance seemed that of an easy-tempered bon vivant. On the present occasion, however, it appeared to have lost its usual joyous character, for the eye-brow lowered, and every feature was impressed with a deep melancholy. On the upper lip was a moustache, and in the centre of the chin a tuft of hair occasionally worn at the present day by military fops, and called an *imperial.* But the dress of the solitary occupant of the chamber showed that he was a son not of the sword, but of the Church, for a skull-cap was on his head, while the rest of his person was enveloped in a Cardinal's robe. It was the prime minister of Spain—Alberoni.

"Yes," said he to himself, as he raised his head from his hand, and sank back in his chair, "let fools or sceptics say what they will, there is a God and he is just. It is scarcely five years since I committed my great crime, and now follows its punishment. I came to this country unknown and a beggar. Anne de la Tremouille found me in my obscurity—employed me—raised me; gave me

wealth, position, influence; and how did I repay her? The adder became warmed, and stung the hand that cherished it. Well, I had the reward I hoped for. I became Bishop, Archbishop, Cardinal, Grandee, Prime Minister of Spain. I brought to my new office talents and energies which those miserable descendants of the Goths never dreamt of. I found ruined docks, disorganized troops—an empty treasury. I reformed all this. I gave to the country fleets, armies, wealth, a material power which was never surpassed even in the days of her great emperor, and which should have bestowed a dominion greater than that emperor ever possessed. And what has been the result? Nothing but ruin and disgrace. The rope which I had twisted so carefully has proved itself of sand. The mighty enterprises which I had devised with such apparent promise of success have failed. The treachery of the agent, the bullet of the assassin, the very winds of heaven, the hand of man and God have combined to mar my work: and now comes this last disgrace—this day's disho-

nour—to cap all the rest; and I, a prince of the Church and prime minister of Spain, have been scourged—struck—spit on, as if I were the vilest beggar that crawls within its confines. It is sufficient to shake reason in its seat, and make me mad—mad—mad!"

The recollection seemed to overwhelm the unhappy man, for, burying his face in his hands, he let his head sink upon the table, as if in the extremity of despair.

His sorrow was interrupted by a gentle tap at the door. The sound seemed to recall the Cardinal at once to himself, for he sprang to his feet, and while his face crimsoned with passion, he asked, in a voice of thunder, who was there. The door opened in reply to the summons, and an ecclesiastic, in the dress of a canon of the Church, entered the room.

The new comer was a man about fifty, with a face and person which must in youth have been strikingly handsome, but habits of long-continued dissipation had left their trace upon both. Still the expression was an agreeable one; it was frank, honest, kind-

hearted, that, in short, of one, who, to use a common phrase, is his own worst enemy. The man closed the door gently, and having done so, stood silently surveying the Cardinal with a glance which bespoke strong affection and sympathy. His appearance seemed at once to have relieved Alberoni from the momentary constraint which he had put upon himself, for his face resumed its mournful expression, and with a faintly uttered, "Is it you, Di Castro?" he again sank back in his chair.

"Yes, your Eminence, it is I," was the answer, and it was uttered in tones as low as the observation that had awakened it. There was again silence for about a minute; the new comer stood, as if in embarrassment, gazing at the floor, and endeavouring to conceal his agitation by playing with the large broad-brimmed hat which forms the appendage of the Spanish clergy. The Cardinal broke silence—

"You have heard the news?" said he.

There was no answer.

"God's curse!" said the impatient prelate;

"have you lost your tongue, man? Answer me, I tell you, and at once. Again I ask, have you heard the news?"

Di Castro bowed.

"I doubted it not," said Alberoni. "I might have guessed it. Arcos and Santa Cruz were present, and they hate me too bitterly, not to have, by this time, circulated it through all Madrid. Yes, Di Castro," continued he, "this day, in the king's presence, the Grand Chamberlain struck me with his stick!—me, a prince of the Church!—me, the prime minister of Spain!"

"It is scarcely credible," replied his companion; "I had heard a whisper of it in the streets, and hurried hither in order that I might have it disproved from your Eminence's lips."

"No, it is true; true as holy writ."

"And what could have led on the Duke of Escalona to such an outrage? A man so grave, so cautious, so broken by years."

"You forget the one quality which is the cause of all. You should have added, a man who is a Spanish noble. You know how

they hate me, these grandees; indolent, ignorant, without either intelligence of mind or activity of person, they are energetic only in their jealousy. Under their rule for a century the affairs of the kingdom have decayed. I have given Spain back power and wealth and position, and her children detest me for having done for them what they could not do for themselves."

"True, your Eminence, but this I knew before. What I would learn is the immediate cause of this unheard-of violence."

"Then, hear it now. You know the miserable creature that we have for a king—shy, timid, obstinate. A man who has not an idea beyond his wife and his breviary. You know also the hot-headed, reckless countrywoman of ours to whom I married him?"

Di Castro bowed.

"It is through them I rule this kingdom. He obeys me because he is her slave; and she obeys me because an Italian, like ourselves, coming from the same duchy, speaking the same language, and the object of the

same animosities, she knows and feels that it is only through me, a countryman of her own, that she can retain her authority."

"All true, your Eminence; but, again, will you pardon me when I say, what has this to do with the outrage of the Duke of Escalona?"

"Are you so dull, Di Castro? Can you not guess its cause? Do you not see that the queen and I have but one common interest and one common means of giving effect to it. This miserable creature that we call king—this crowned monk, who would have established in the court of Spain its monastic ceremonial, even if his bigot predecessor Philip II. had not established it before him—is our captive, our slave. He sees but with our eyes, he hears but with our ears, and he knows nothing more of what goes on beyond the walls of his palace, than we find it convenient to our interest that he should know. Does not your dull, stupid intellect, teach you, that if any other man than myself could obtain access to him, in a quarter of an hour's conversation he might

suggest to his suspicious nature, doubts as to the excellence of the government of his queen and his prime minister."

"And the Duke of Escalona—"

"He wished to be that man. The king, as you know, has been ill, and the duke, as grand chamberlain, according to some wretched Court etiquette, has, it seems, the right to see the medicine administered. This was a mere pretence, but it answered as an excuse for having a private conference with Philip. The duke demanded to exercise his privilege. By the queen's orders and mine he was refused permission to enter, but the insolent old man pushed aside the usher at the door, and forcibly made his way into the room. The king was sitting on his bed. The duke approached him, no doubt with a purpose of pouring into the royal ear some of the thousand complaints which he and his brother grandees are circulating daily at Madrid. I saw the danger—intercepted him—and laid my hand upon his arm. What do you think, Di Castro? By heavens it is true! the scoundrel struck

me several times over the head with his cane."

"Impossible!"

"True as I am a living man; he struck me, I tell you, till from sheer exhaustion he sank into a chair."

"And what followed?"

"Her Majesty, scandalised at the disgraceful scene, made a sign to the Duke of Arcos and the Marquis of Santa Cruz, and they forcibly removed him from the room."

"And what did the king?"

"What did the king, asked you;" replied the Cardinal in a burst of passion, "nothing, positively nothing. The idiot sat in his bed gaping at us in terror and astonishment, but without moving a limb or uttering a word."

"And this is the end of it?"

"No, it is only the beginning. You have already told me that the story is circulated over Madrid. Who can tell what will be its result. It may prove my ruin,"

"Pshaw! your Eminence," said his companion in a tone of well affected cheerfulness, "you over rate the evil. When the English

destroyed your fleet on the coast of Sicily, and the Regent of Orleans seized Cellamare, and prevented the rebellion you wished to create in France, you met with greater misfortunes."

"You are wrong. The misfortunes were not greater. They brought with them only loss, this brings dishonour; and the minister who is despised is lost, lost, lost." And overwhelmed as it were by the magnitude of the calamity, the Cardinal once more sank down in his chair and buried his face in his hands.

His companion looked at him with compassionating eyes, and there was a silence for some minutes.

"I have never," said Di Castro at length, and in a tone of strong affection, "I have never before seen your Eminence so depressed. The future is not so black as you would make it. It is your distempered mind which gives gloominess and grandeur to its outlines. You are ill—"

"It may be so, Di Castro," said Alberoni, after a pause. "The mind may lend its in-

fluence, yet who at will can annihilate its agency. Have you never felt a presentiment of coming sorrow? Have you never, at certain moments of your life, been imbued with the belief that there is some being in the world who has been created to be your evil genius? Days may pass away—weeks—months—years—and we may think not of such a being, but suddenly, and when there is apparently nothing to suggest its presence, the hated vision comes before us—its dim shadowy features brightened up for the moment with a smile of triumph. Have you not felt that such a vision is a certain intimation of future evil? Such a warning have I had now. Last night Anne de la Tremouille stood before me as distinct to my eyes as when we parted at Xadraca. As they dragged her to her carriage she then turned round and said, 'Julio Alberoni, your hour will come.' Last night I tell you I saw her again. The attitude—the expression—the smile of hatred was the same. I knew it foreboded disaster, and it has come. The loss of the fleet—the conquest of Sicily

—the death of Charles XII.—the failure of the Jacobite invasion—the abortive rebellion in France—even the disgrace of having hostile troops in the country of which I am minister—all have come upon me in the last six months; and each has served, in its turn, to herald some future and greater sorrow; and this day's disgrace, cruel as it is, is but the forerunner of some approaching and still mightier catastrophe."

"Your Eminence," said Di Castro, in a cheerful tone, "sees these things in too gloomy a light. I laugh at calamities that have no better precursors than a dream."

"You are wrong, Di Castro. Anne de la Tremouille is not one of those who would entrust her vengeance to the hand of others. Fate may be powerful enough in itself, but she will, at least, do her best to aid it. It was but three days ago that I received two couriers from the frontier, and each bore important dispatches."

"From whom?"

"The first was from Argenson. The Lieutenant of Police of his royal highness

Philip Bourbon, Duke of Orleans, and Regent of France, furnishes, for a consideration, information to the minister of his trusty and well-beloved cousin, Philip Bourbon, king of Spain."

"And what said Argenson?"

"Judge for yourself," said the Cardinal, as he handed to Di Castro a letter, "read that aloud and judge."

The canon read as follows:—

No. X.

"*The Abbot of the Filles de la Croix to the Dean of St. Isidro.*

"For the information of those whom it may concern, and of holy church, I have to state, that it has been decided by the barber's son, and his English gossip, that a private emissary should be dispatched immediately to the deanery for the purpose of sending back Italians to Italy. It was arranged, moreover, as I anticipated (Vide No. VII.), that such emissary should be a countryman of the gossip's, and amply provided with money and letters of recommendation to the

curate and the good man's wife. I have since learned that a youngster (the gossip's friend), who arrived here secretly, and remained for a week, during which time he was visited thrice by the barber's son, and twice by the gossip, has since left suddenly, and taken the south road. If he go beyond the parish boundary, it will probably be in disguise.

"N.B.—I have been informed that two women, the elderly dame and another, saw the youngster before starting."

Di Castro laid down the letter, but with a look which testified distinctly enough that he had not drawn any idea from its contents.

"You do not understand it?" said the Cardinal.

The priest shook his head.

"*Cospetto*, man! a child might understand it; if he knew from whom it came, and to whom it was sent."

"Yet," said his companion with a laugh, "my more than childlike intelligence can

make nothing of it. Who, in the name of all the gods, is the barber's son?"

"The Cardinal Dubois, sole offspring of the *barbier-medecin* of Breves-la-Gaillarde, Jean Dubois, and Marie Dujoyet his wife."

"And the English gossip?"

"Lord Stanhope, the British ambassador."

"And the good man's wife?"

"Our most gracious sovereign, Elizabeth Farnese, born princess of Parma."

"And the curate?"

"That scoundrel Jesuit, D'Aubenton, the father confessor."

"Now I begin to comprehend. So you fear an attempt being made by the French and English Courts to send you back to Italy; for you of course are the Italian."

"Ha! your Bœotian instinct has discovered that, has it? Yes; I am the Italian. The danger you see is pressing."

"I see nothing of the sort."

"Pooh! you are duller than I took you to be. What is George the First?"

"King of Great Britain to be sure."

"And Philip, Duke of Orleans?"

"Why regent of France."

"Precisely. Both are in possession of what they are not entitled to. The Stuarts are the legitimate sovereigns of England, and our master, Philip V., is uncle to Louis XV., and has a better claim to the regency of France than the Duke of Orleans, who is only his third cousin; and neither George nor the regent can forget that I have endeavoured to send back, the one to the Palais Royal, and the other to his electorate."

"But you are at peace with both."

"So much the worse. These times of professed friendships are more dangerous than open war."

"Yet there is nothing in the letter that threatens immediate danger."

"Wrong again. There is one phrase in the letter which tells me that the danger is immediate. Did you remark the post-script."

"Yes; something about an old woman and a young one."

"No, Di Castro. It was *the* old woman,

my sworn enemy, the Princess of Ursins. When she lends her spoon to stir the pot, the broth is like to be scalding."

"Pshaw! the thought of the princess ever fills your head with foolish fancies. You will hear no more of this emissary."

"Why you idiot, he is, I suspect, already past the frontier. Three days ago I got a letter from the curate of Irun, informing me that a young man, dressed as a contrabandista, had passed through on his way to the south. He, I have no doubt, is the fellow; but I have limed a twig for him, and have had orders sent to every gate to have him arrested as soon as he makes his appearance. What puzzles me most in the matter is, that the curate mentions that two lady travellers left Irun along with him. If my man be really Lord Stanhope's agent, who the ladies can be I cannot guess, for I know that the princess dare not venture into Spain."

"And what if I can inform your Eminence?"

"*Oh, per bacco!* Benedict, that would be too absurd. You, a drunken sot of a canon, to discover what has puzzled the prime minister of Spain. Why man, this is political. Had it been a matter touching the flavour of a cask of Valdepenas, or the shape of a well-turned ankle, I might have applied to you."

"It is precisely because there is a woman in the case that I can aid your Eminence. You remember some thirty years ago, that after finishing my studies at the seminary at Parma, and taking orders, I went to Naples. There I became the confessor of a lady of the name of Donna Violante, the widow of an avocato."

"You were her lover!"

"I was her confessor," replied Benedict, with a smile. "But to the matter in hand. Donna Violante was well connected, and twelve years since, when the Duke of Escalona was Viceroy of Naples, she was appointed governess to his granddaughter, then a child of eight years of age. The girl became attached to her duenna, and

the Neapolitan, upon the duke's giving up the viceroyalty, accompanied the family to Madrid, and there she and her confessor renewed their former acquaintance. For a year past she has been in France with her young charge, but by a message from her to day, I learn that they have just returned, and something whispers to me that they are the lady travellers chronicled by the curate of Irun."

"Ah, ha!" said the Cardinal, "Then the meeting there with Stanhope's envoy was no chance one. Escalona's eldest son married a niece of the princess of Ursins, and this girl has no doubt been employed as a messenger between the seditious grandee and my old enemy. Away man to the duke's palace. Away at once, I say. Renew your intimacy with your penitent; praise once more her bright eyes; the compliment will be the more valued as she must be old and ugly by this time, and gather from her woman's vanity everything you can learn of the plotting."

Di Castro was about to leave the room,

when a signal from Alberoni's finger arrested him.

"Stop," said the Cardinal, "a thought occurs to me. Let me see once more Argenson's letter. So, so," muttered he "Stanhope's agent is instructed to address himself to the queen and the father confessor. I will make sure of one of them. Di Castro, my old friend," continued he aloud, and in a coaxing voice, "you are going to become a great man; I have decided on making you confessor to Philip V."

The information seemed to give anything but pleasure to his companion, for he started back and looked the picture of consternation.

"Why, you fool, what is the matter with you. One would suppose that you had seen the Medusa's head. Do you know what I offer you? The first post in the kingdom, after my own."

Di Castro groaned.

"A salary," continued the Cardinal, "of a thousand ducats a month, apartments in the palace, one of the royal carriages, and a daily table of six covers."

The enumeration of the perquisites of office seemed to make no favourable impression upon the confidant, for he looked piteously at the prime minister, and twirled with great energy his shovel hat.

"What in the name of all the gods ails the man?" shouted Alberoni, yielding to the impulse of his Italian temperament, and his face purple with anger. "Why, what more would you have, you fool?" You will spend your days in the halls of a palace, and will associate with the first nobility in Europe—the grandees of Spain."

"I had rather spend them in a pot-house with the officers of the Walloon Guard. They are better company, and I suspect the honester fellows of the two."

"You will have the direction of the conscience of royalty. There's honour for you, you rogue!"

"You made my old chum, Domenico di Guerra, confessor to the queen, and he tells me he has been miserable ever since."

"But it is not the queen: it is the king who is to be your penitent."

"I am the more sorry for it. I would rather confess a woman than a man any day. The queen, if she is fretful, petulant, and changeable, is at least young and handsome; but the king"—and Di Castro stopped suddenly, and shrugged his shoulders.

"*Cospetto!* man; you will have nothing to do. His Majesty is devout."

"So much the worse for the confessor. I would undertake fifty swash bucklers more willingly. The fellows make a clean breast of it, and there's an end. You see nothing of them again for a twelvemonth. But our devout sovereign is trembling for his soul every five minutes. It would be the death of me. I could never stand the fatigue."

"Pooh! man; you would get accustomed to him."

"But I have my suspicions he would not get accustomed to me. I dine at mid-day, and"—and Di Castro stopped suddenly, and coloured.

"And the dinner," said the Cardinal, continuing the sentence, "is followed by four

bottles of Valdepenas, and then you doubt your power of discussing minute points of theology. Ah! Benedict, Benedict, you are the old man still." And the easy-tempered prelate laughed and shook his head.

"Your Eminence sees then," said his companion, "that the thing is impossible."

"I see nothing of the sort," replied the immovable Cardinal. "You have only to bolt your door, and if the king send for you, say through the keyhole that you are meditating on St. Augustin, and cannot come. He will like you all the better for your refusal."

"But I can't be always meditating on St. Augustin. If I am father confessor, I must sometimes confess."

"True; but you can tell Philip that confession is only orthodox in the morning, for that then, men are most pure. In your case it will be true to the letter, for you will have slept off your debauch and be sober."

It seemed as if Di Castro were anxious to oblige his patron, for he pondered long and

deeply on the proposal; but reflection did not appear to give him a higher relish for the honours thus thrust upon him; and at length, in his usual abrupt manner, he broke forth—

"No, no, Julio; it will not do. I will have none of your confessorships. And where is the necessity? Why put me into an office I detest?"

"Because I must dismiss D'Aubenton."

"And why dismiss D'Aubenton?"

"Because I fear his doing me a mischief with the king. He has never forgiven me cheating him of the Cardinal's hat I promised him."

"Then why cheat him of his Cardinal's hat? Why break your word? The falsehood was a sin."

"In this case, my dear Benedict, it was worse; it was a blunder. But I must repair the error by putting it out of the fellow's power to injure me; and he will if he can. He is a Jesuit—a cold-blooded, canting, scheming, ambitious, greedy priest, who

looks as if he would put rats'-bane into one's soup, and—" But the vituperations of the Cardinal were suddenly interrupted, for a servant in the royal livery opened the door and announced "His reverence the father confessor."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE FATHER CONFESSOR.

Scarcely had the announcement been made when a priest entered the room. He was a little thin man, of about sixty, but years seemed not to have impaired his mental or bodily energies. The face, in common parlance, possessed no beauty, but there was something in its expression, and in the possessed calmness of its deep set dark grey eye which gave it a character of power that made the spectator forget, or be unconscious of, the plainness of the features. The step was stealthy and cat-like, and the manner apparently one which could borrow its cha-

racter from the feeling of the moment, or rather, for the word feeling is little applicable, from what the interest of the party dictated as most suitable to the circumstances. The new comer was plainly dressed, in a long dark robe, and wore on his head the shovel hat which forms the distinguishing feature of the secular clergy of the Peninsula, and which had been adopted for the order of Jesus, probably from old associations, by its Spanish founder. This he now doffed, and with an expression in which sorrow was blended with humility, advanced towards Alberoni.

The announcement of the confessor of the king had been made rather unexpectedly, and at the very instant when the prime minister was employed in enumerating, for the benefit of his colleague, the thousand evil qualities of the director of the royal conscience; but the Cardinal was too much of a Machiavel, and had served too long an apprenticeship as a courtier, to be taken by surprise. It was, therefore, with a face beaming with smiles that he rose from his

seat, and hurried to the door to meet his visitor. Even Di Castro, whose blunt, outspoken temper, made him not unfrequently forget the reverence due to the prime minister, seemed to feel the influence of the new comer, for he recalled at once the conventional proprieties of priestly manner, drew himself up to his full height, and assumed a cold formal bearing, such as suited one of the lower orders of the clergy in the presence of a prince of the Church; and, when a moment after, he received from his patron a glance of the eye which commanded his departure, he glided from the apartment with a profoundness of obeisance, and a sliding noiselessness of step, which could not have been exceeded by the most accomplished acolyte of the Sacred College.

D'Aubenton, during the short period that Di Castro remained in the room, had not uttered a syllable, but had confined his communications with the Cardinal to a glance of the eye, which conveyed, or was intended to convey, deep sorrow. No sooner, however, did the door close on the retreating footsteps,

than he hurried forward, and seizing Alberoni's hand between his own, exclaimed, in a low, well-modulated tone of intense anguish—

"Ah! your Eminence, what a day of grief and mortification, for me,—for the Sacred College,—for the entire Christian Church!"

"Alas, my friend," replied the Cardinal, returning the pressure of the hand with equal affection, "it has been a black day for Christianity; but what will you? It is the part of the ministers of the cross to suffer. From the earliest ages they have been exposed to martyrdom at the hands of misjudging and sinful men."

"It may be so," said D'Aubenton; "and yet the resignation of the martyr, admirable and edifying as it is, should in no degree blind us to the unwarranted violence of the act from which he suffers. I cannot express to your Eminence the horror with which I heard of it, and I hurried hither to repeat to you my regrets, and offer my consolation."

"Neither, reverend father, are needed by me; it was not I that was injured, but the Church; or rather, I should say, that distin-

guished member of it who in fact rules the Spanish monarchy. Father D'Aubenton is the confessor of the king and the master of his mind and of his acts. It was his influence—the legitimate influence of the spiritual director of royalty—which the Spanish nobles attacked in my person."

"Your Eminence pays me a compliment which I do not deserve; I have no share in the government and possess no power—a poor priest, who thinks of nothing but his breviary."

"You speak, holy father, with unnecessary humility; he who has a right to know the private thoughts of kings, is best able to guide them."

"Yet, your Eminence, it is indisputable that for the last hundred years the affairs of Spain have gone but ill, and notwithstanding, it has been generally alleged that my predecessors in office had much to do with their management."

"Your observation is just, but the royal confessors were then Dominicans; gross, bigoted, uneducated Dominicans. Philip V.

has the happiness to have for the director of his conscience a member of the Order of Jesus—that Order which has long been recognised as the essence of mind, and energy, and wisdom."

D'Aubenton made a slight bow.

"Does not that Order," continued the Cardinal, "everywhere breathe not only its spirit into the councils of its children, but give them success? The reign of Louis XIV. was the most glorious that Europe has witnessed for centuries. What made it so? It was guided by the maxims of Loyola. It was watched over by his disciples, Pères La Chaise and Le Tellier."

Again D'Aubenton smiled slightly, and a shade of irony came across his features, as if he mocked at the idea of his being bought by flattery. Once more, however, his face resumed its usual calm expression, and in his ordinary quiet tone, he said—

"And what, after the outrage offered to your Eminence, do you propose to do?"

"What do I propose to do?" and Alberoni looked interrogatively.

"Do you intend, pardon me the question, to withdraw from his Majesty the benefit of your services?"

"What could suggest an idea so extraordinary?"

"I fear it may have occurred to his Majesty. He asked me, but a few minutes bygone, if the feeling of the other grandees towards his prime minister were as violent as that which had been this morning exhibited by the Duke of Escalona?"

"Ha!" said the Cardinal, and notwithstanding his habitual self-command, the colour mounted to his cheeks, and in a tone which slightly betrayed anxiety, he said—

"And what replied your reverence?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing!" repeated the Cardinal, with something of irritation; "I should have hoped that in one whom I know to be so sincerely my friend, I should have found a defender of my policy."

"No one could be a more attached friend of your Eminence than I am," said D'Aubenton; "but, as I said before, I have no

acquaintance with politics, and do not interfere with what concerns me not."

"True, true, I had forgotten," said the Cardinal, in a tone of well-acted simplicity, "I had for a moment forgotten your unworldliness, and your devotion to your profession. And what further said his Majesty?"

"Nothing."

"But what meant he by the observation you have just repeated?"

"It is not for me to fathom the thoughts of princes."

"My dear D'Aubenton," said the Cardinal, pressing his hands with affection, "I can easily comprehend that in matters so unconnected with your holy duties, you take but slight interest; yet to me I know you will be frank. Had you been compelled to give your attention to so ungrateful a subject, what inference would you have drawn from the king's remarks?"

"Why, your Eminence," said D'Aubenton, in a tone of affectionate confidence, "it is painful to my feelings to give utterance to the thought—but from you, my dear friend,

I conceal nothing, and to you I will say that it appeared to me that his Majesty had, for the moment, the intention of withdrawing his confidence from the distinguished man who now conducts the affairs of Spain, and giving it to one of her own native-born nobles."

"To a Grandee, in short?"

"To a Grandee!"

The two looked at each other, but in vain. The faces of both were so well drilled that neither gave evidence of any internal feeling.

The Cardinal again broke silence.

"Such a government, my dear friend, would be impossible. Our sovereign is a Catholic king, and, besides Spain and the Indies, his territories occupy two-thirds of Italy. With Naples and the Milanese on either side of the States of the Church, he is brought into constant contact with the Holy Father, and it is thus necessary that one of the sacred college should be at the head of our affairs. It was thus that under the old dynasty, the government was administered by Ximenes and the Cardinal Duke of Lerma. The short reign of the new race

has required the services of Porto Carrero, Del Giudice and myself. Nay, even the intrusive monarch who, for eight years, by the assistance of the English, kept his ground in the Peninsula, was obliged to succumb to the same universal rule of policy, and place his administration in the hands of Cardinal Sala. You see, then, my dear friend, that the government you speak of would be impossible."

"Not altogether," said D'Aubenton, in a quiet tone.

"Yes, altogether, for, except myself, there is now not a prince of the Church in Spain."

"It is true. But Philip is a zealous supporter of the Triple Crown, and to such the Triple Crown is generous."

"What mean you?"

"That if the king asked of the pope to add to the number of the Sacred College, his Holiness might possibly comply."

"Ha!" continued the Cardinal, unable, notwithstanding his best efforts to control his emotion; "who is the man to be recommended for the purple?"

"It would," said D'Aubenton, with a simper, "be too high an honour for the humble person who now addresses you, and yet, it might be that the grace is intended for him."

"You!" said Alberoni, with a burst of astonishment and vexation, which it was impossible for him to conceal.

"Yes, I," quietly replied D'Aubenton. "Your Eminence may recollect that you once did me the undeserved kindness to propose mentioning my name to the Holy Father as that of a fit and proper person to receive the honour; and the judgment of your Eminence is so universally allowed to be correct, that it may, possibly, have suggested the idea to others."

Once more the minister stood aghast at the revelation, but he was not a man to abandon easily the game, and he resumed:—

"Well, my dear friend, there is no denying it. There is no one so well entitled to the highest dignities of the Church as yourself; but it mortifies deeply, most deeply, my feelings of friendship and affection that

you should think of owing it to other hands than mine. You know I promised to get you the purple."

"Yes, you *promised* it."

"It was some—"

"Three years ago."

"True, true," said the conscience-stricken minister, "and I should have obtained it for you; but will you pardon me the error, if it be one. I thought you were too deeply wrapt up in the sacred duties of your calling to care for such vanities. A Cardinal's robe, my dear friend—"

"Is what I think your Eminence is wearing at the present moment."

"True—true—true," said Alberoni, colouring to the temples. "But my case was different; I was positively forced to accept it."

"The sacrifice," said D'Aubenton, in his usual quiet tone, "must have been most painful to your feelings. But may I ask the reason why it was made?"

"The rank was necessary to enable me to be prime minister."

"His Majesty had before created you a

Grandee, and if I remember aright, Olivarez, Medina Celi, and others who have been at the head of the government of Spain, held no higher rank."

"Ah, my dear friend, do you not see the difference? The Guzmans and La Cerdas were members of the most distinguished houses in Castile, while I was a new man. It was only as a prince of the Church that I could put myself on a footing with the old nobility."

D'Aubenton smiled, but said nothing.

"And now, my dear friend," continued the Cardinal, "I trust I have satisfied you that if I accepted honours for myself, and omitted securing them for you, I was the victim of necessity in the one case, and of delusion in the other. Ah, had I supposed for a moment that you would have accepted such a bauble, how eagerly would I have procured it for you!"

"For the honour itself," said D'Aubenton, in a tone of affected modesty, "I care nothing; but, had it come from you, I should have valued it.

"Ah my dear friend, let me still have the felicity of giving you such a testimony of my friendship."

"It is unnecessary," said D'Aubenton, coldly. "I should now but disappoint the affection of others."

"Pooh, pooh. What is their affection compared with mine. They aid you to the purple!" said the Cardinal, contemptuously. "They have not the power. No, no, my dear D'Aubenton, these new allies of yours are a feeble helpless band of intriguers, equally unable to advance efficiently your interests, or conduct with dignity and success the affairs of the government. This is your opinion. This must, I am sure, be your opinion. You will impress it on his Majesty."

Once more D'Aubenton smiled, and then he added in a tone of affected simplicity, "Again I repeat, I trouble not myself with such vanities. I interfere not with the affairs of the world, and it would be stepping beyond the just limits of my office, to mix myself up with political intrigue. I will not advise the king."

Alberoni had been gradually losing his self-command, and for some time he paced backwards and forwards with rapid steps. A side glance from the eye of his companion showed that his movements were not unremarked, but beyond that, there was nothing in the marble countenance of the Jesuit that betrayed passion or interest. At length the Cardinal seemed to have formed a resolution, for he suddenly stopped his hurried walk in front of the father confessor.

"D'Aubenton," said he, "this is child's play, and unworthy of men like us. Let us throw away our masks and speak frankly. In such a fashion will I address you. In such a fashion will you answer me?"

For some time the father confessor regarded his companion with his cold grey eye. He too, after a while, appeared to have formed his resolution, for he looked at Alberoni and nodded.

"There is a wish," said the minister, "to overturn my government?"

D'Aubenton gave a sign of assent.

"A party has been formed for that pur-

pose, and it has offered to purchase your co-operation with a Cardinal's hat?"

Again the father confessor gave a slight bow.

"Now listen to me," said Alberoni, "It is natural that your interest should recommend the acceptance of the offer, but it is doubtful if your new friends have the power to obtain for you the honour: I have."

"You said so before."

"And did not keep my word," you would add. "It is true. But I will keep it now, for my own safety requires it. Hark ye. You are a Frenchman. I am an Italian. We are both strangers in this country, and so long as we are united, we can defy opposition. Let them separate us, and we must individually fall. The grandees have promised you the purple. I will bid higher for your aid. I will assure you of that, and more;" and Alberoni approached the confessor, and whispered in his ear, "I will help you to the Papacy."

"Pshaw, your Eminence," said D'Aubenton, with a contemptuous smile. "You

forget that we were to speak without our masks, and you are again playing with me. You would, you say, help me to the chair of St. Peter. What then would become of your own well known aspirations to the Triple Crown?"

"I have none."

An incredulous shake of the head was the reply.

"By heavens," said the excited Cardinal, in a loud eager tone, "I speak the truth. I have no passion for church royalty."

"Pooh, pooh! You forget my friend, Julio. Your very name is a warrant for the thought. It is a word that hints at Cardinals and Popes—that speaks of ambition and power."

"Then it speaks truly. I have the one, and wish to possess the other. I would, as you allege, tread in the steps of my great namesake, but he should be neither Julius Mazarin the Cardinal, nor Julius II., the Pope."

"Who then?"

"A greater than either—*the* Julius—the

first of the Cæsars, not the ecclesiastical, but the lay emperor. Why, man, I have a perfect contempt for all the mummeries of our creed, with its power over distempered imaginations and weak minds. What I want is real power—the power over living and strong and animate bodies, and fleets and armies, and wealthy cities and great kingdoms. I am at present master of Spain. I would be more. I would make Philip regent of France, and through him rule there also. He now holds the Milanese and Naples. I would unite to them by conquest, Piedmont, and the mainland of the Venetians, and Tuscany, and the States of the Church, and then—the Mayor of the Palace to the master of an empire greater than any since the days of Charlemagne—I should have my wish, and be at rest. *There* I should say is an object worthy of ambition—a fitter, a nobler end to the career of a long life than to rule over a parcel of trembling dotards in the Vatican, who while they affect to give laws to a distant world, cannot control the mob of the capital they

inhabit, or check the excesses of its paltriest nobles."

"Your Eminence has indeed spoken without mask," said D'Aubenton, with a laugh, "and however ill advised I may hold your aspirations, I will not attempt to gainsay them. So once more I will trust you. You will give me the Cardinal's hat, and your support for the greater future."

"I promise both."

"Then have no fear of Philip's changing his prime minister, and so I bid you farewell. But you have been outspoken to me, and I will imitate your frankness. You have deceived me once. If you deceive me a second time, *remember*," and he held up his finger admonishingly, "it will be no fault of Claude D'Aubenton, if you do not pay the penalty of the treachery."

He left the room as he spoke, but even ere he had reached the door, the slight colour which had flushed his cheek, and the excitement which had marked his manner during the utterance of his parting warning had already disappeared, and his face and

step had alike resumed their general expression of cold indifference to the world and its objects.

Alberoni gazed steadily after him till the door had closed upon his visitor.

"I trust him not," said he to himself, "I will trust him not. To have my fortune dependant upon a man like that, without feelings, without affections, without principle, is to have the sword of Damocles perpetually suspended over one's head. No charm of the present would compensate for the ever constant fear of the future. No, I must remove him and put Di Castro in his place, and then with king and queen both my own, I shall really be master of Spain and the Indies."

And the Cardinal once more threw himself into his chair, and abandoned himself to the agreeable visions which his imagination had conjured up of future greatness.

## CHAPTER III.

### A YOUNG LADY AT HOME.

THREE days had elapsed since Clifford's arrival in Madrid. His instructions from Lord Stanhope had been to depend, in a great measure, for his movements upon the advice and information derived from the Marquis Scotti, the envoy of the Duke of Parma. He had been further counselled to exhibit himself in the streets as little as possible, and to avoid any acquaintance or intercourse that chance might fling in his way.

For the first two days these instructions

were literally obeyed; but to the young and energetic there is nothing so exhausting as enforced inaction. And Clifford, with his superabundant vitality, soon found his stay-at-home existence intolerable.

As hour after hour passed on without his receiving any message from the Italian—for he had intimated his arrival to Scotti, and forwarded to him his master's letter—his impatient temper chafed more and more under the imprisonment, and at last he determined, if it were but for an hour, to breathe once more the fresh air of heaven; with the latent hope, that chance might aid his political schemes, or give him some key to the mysterious incidents which had crowded with strange adventure the last ten days of his life.

"Come," said he to himself, "I should acquire some little knowledge of my locality. My memories of Madrid are rather faded, and to play my part effectively, in the event of a crisis, it may be as well to renew them. No one can know me here; and to avoid any hazard of an encounter with the officials,

I shall select for my promenade the hour of the siesta. The streets will then be as deserted as London at midnight.

Accordingly, on the third day after his arrival, the young envoy moved forth. To assist him in preserving his incognito, a trunk full of different costumes had been sent from Paris, and awaited his arrival. From this he selected, on the present occasion, the dress with which we are so familiar from the portraits of Titian and Velasquez, and which was still worn by the citizens of Madrid. For the Spaniards,—true to their Asiatic origin through Phenician and Moor,—change with extreme unwillingness their habits, or the character of their clothing; and although Philip V. had done his best to introduce the fashion of the Tuilleries—the coat, periwig, and three-cornered hat—and had enforced it by refusing to receive any one at court in other guise, still the wishes of the sovereign had exercised little influence over the general population. As in the days of the princes of the house of Austria, the Madrilenos still adhered to the

tight velvet breeches, the doublet, the cloak, the broad-brimmed plumed hat, and the long rapier; and it was in such a dress that Clifford made his way into the Calle Alcalá.

It was about two o'clock. Everything was silent in the sleeping city. The heats of summer were passed, but the sun of a November day, blazing forth from an unclouded sky, still produced a temperature that was agreeable.

Clifford turned to the right, and made his way, by the Puerta del Sol, towards the palace. He did not, however, venture to approach its immediate neighbourhood, but continued his stroll towards the bridge of Segovia. He then re-entered the city, and took his road homewards by the end of the Calle de los Cuchilleros, one of the streets at the back of the Calle de Toledo. As he crossed it, two women came up the street, as if from the Plaza Mayor.

They wore the usual dress of the townsfolks—the saya, or upper petticoat, used for going out of doors, of black silk; with man-

tillas, of the same colour. To a common eye there might have been in their appearance nothing remarkable, but to the English envoy it was evident, at the first glance, that the younger of the figures, at least, was that of one of the companions of his journey, Donna Teresa. The recognition seemed to be mutual, though apparently little welcome, for the young lady drew her mantilla more closely round her, and, turning back, hastily retraced her steps at a pace which, if not a run, approached as nearly to it as well might be.

The speed, the agitation, and the unconcealed desire to avoid him, would have satisfied Clifford, had he doubted the justice of his conjectures, and he hurried after the flying fair ones. The reasons for the pursuit were, in fact, various. Something might be attributed to a wish to penetrate the mystery which had hitherto surrounded parties who had taken so deep an interest in his movements, and who seemed to possess a power of carrying their kindly intentions into action, such as was hardly

consistent with the very modest position in society which they had affected.

But there were other and more powerful causes than mere curiosity. The scene at the inn at Buitrago may be in the recollection of our readers, and they may remember the declaration of love made by the contrabandista to his fair companion. Yet short as the acquaintance had been, the feeling was not, as it might have been supposed, one of momentary passion. The beauty, the manners, the intellect of Donna Teresa, had fascinated Colonel Clifford, notwithstanding his best efforts, or, to say the truth, his determination to the contrary.

In vain had he repeated to himself a thousand times that he knew nothing of her real disposition, her family, her connexions —it might be even her name—and that, under such circumstances, it was folly to attach himself to one who might so little deserve it. In the case of the young envoy, as in that of all others who have come under the sway of Dan Cupid, love overruled discretion. But though he had poured forth

his passion, and, if the young lady's agitation were to be considered as evidence, to no unwilling ears, yet he had met no reply. The interruption, occasioned apparently by Perez and his fellow Gitano, had brought the conference to a close at a moment when its interest was the greatest, and he had been left in doubt as to whether he might, or might not, hope for a return to his affection —a doubt the more painful as, from the day of his imprisonment in the Moorish tower, he had lost all clue to his fair enslaver's residence, and nearly all expectation of meeting her again.

It may be well understood then with what intense eagerness he availed himself of the unexpected good fortune which chance had afforded him of renewing his acquaintance with one whom he had feared was lost to him for ever. With rapid steps, accordingly, did he follow Therese and her companion. The approach of the cavalier seemed to alarm the fugitives, for their pace became more accelerated. Still there was little prospect of their being able to escape the

enforced interview. The street was long and deserted, and on one side was flanked by a high wall, apparently, from the perfume of the flowers and the branches of the trees which showed themselves over it, the boundary of extensive gardens.

"They move well," said Clifford to himself; "but it is useless labour. Long before they get to the end of the wall I must overtake them, and then my little beauty shall tell me who she is, and what she is, and what her connexion with the gipsies, and her power over the tribe."

He was disappointed, however, in his speculations. The ladies stopped suddenly, and one of them applied a key to a door in the wall, which, from its being painted of the same colour as the stone-work, had escaped Clifford's notice. It opened, and the ladies hurried in. The key was speedily extracted from the lock, and was applied on the other side, but such was the agitation of the fair janitor, that she was unable, for a while, to fix it in its socket. The delay was favourable to her pursuer. He had

hurried forward on her disappearance, and just as the young girl, who had contrived, at length, to get the key into the lock, was closing the door, with the happy belief of her achieved safety, Clifford arrived in time to plant his foot between the door-post and the door, and prevent its closing.

A desperate struggle ensued. The two women made strenuous efforts to shut the gate, and the cavalier on the outside offered a resistance equally determined. The male power, however, proved the stronger of the two. The fair arms inside became less energetic in their opposition; and at length finding that, in spite of them, the door was, bit by bit, offering greater facilities to the entrance of their adversary, they abandoned all hope of successful resistance, and moved off as fast as their limbs could carry them.

Clifford entered, and looked around. He found himself in a garden, covered mostly with turf, but having its park-like character diversified by long and straight alleys, bordered with orange trees. These crossed

each other at right angles in the centre of the garden, and the point of contact had been ornamented by a basin of white marble, into which gushed a stream of limpid water from the jaws of lions, exquisitely sculptured from the same material.

All this Clifford barely remarked, for the ladies had run off at full speed, and he did his best to overtake them. On reaching the fountain the two dames separated. The elder took to the right, while the younger hurried down the main avenue towards a large palace-looking building at the end of it. She gained it in safety, and made her way through a half-open door. As soon as she had reached the hall inside, she paused for breath, apparently in the belief that her pursuer would not venture to enter the mansion. She was deceived, however. The impetuous traveller rushed in after her. Startled by his appearance, she once more resumed her flight, and took refuge in a large chamber adjoining.

It was hung with tapestry, and had a music-gallery over the door, while at the

further end was a canopy—a piece of decorative furniture jealously confined to the residences of the grandees. The roof was richly carved and gilded, and the panels into which it was divided filled with paintings by the first masters. This retreat did not prove safer than the other, for the young soldier, without hesitating, entered the room.

He found the girl standing by a table in the middle of the apartment. As there was no other door to the chamber than that by which she had obtained access, she probably felt that escape was hopeless, and calmly awaited the approach of her pursuer.

"So, fair lady," said Clifford, as he removed his hat, and approached, with great respect the beautiful being before him—"the stag is brought to bay at last. By my honour, a long chase and a hard one."

"I am astonished, sir cavalier," was the reply, "that you have the assurance to mention it in so triumphant a tone. What right have you to follow a senorita in the street, or to enter unbidden her home?"

"What right have I, indeed!" said her companion. "Permit me to say, that when a man has risked life and limb in a fair lady's cause, he is entitled, at least, to receive her thanks. You gave me scant opportunity before to listen to the expressions of your gratitude, and I am come now to accept with proper modesty any eulogiums you may be pleased to bestow upon me."

"Thanks are not necessary when the obligation has been repaid."

"Repaid!" said Clifford, in astonishment. "Do you call it repayment to have me locked up for four and twenty hours, pulled off my mule, and robbed of my property!"

"Assuredly. If the gentleman with whom I formed acquaintance at Irun had made his appearance at the gate of Madrid, he would, notwithstanding his majo dress, and his melodious fashion of giving forth his favourite song of *Yo qui soy contrabandista*, have been arrested, his papers taken from the curiously-devised secret pocket of

his doublet, and Colonel Clifford would have been to-day in the tower of Segovia."

"Colonel Clifford!" said her companion, in a tone of unutterable astonishment.

"Of course. Does a colonel in his Britannic Majesty's life-guards," said the girl, with a mocking eye, "suppose that he is an unknown personage? His modesty does him injustice."

"You mistake me, lady, I am but a simple contrabandista."

"One who adopts the dress of an hidalgo at intervals, in the happy belief that the plumed hat and velvet doublet will enable him to win ladies' heart, and who gains nothing by the magnificence of his costume but the frightening of two poor women into fits. If Colonel Clifford acts his part no more successfully than he dresses it, he will not gain much renown as an envoy to Elizabeth Farnese."

The astonishment felt by the young Englishman at the intimate acquaintance exhibited of his wishes and his objects, was so great that he was unable to articulate a

syllable, and he stood gazing at his companion for some time with an air that amply testified his stupefaction.

"Madam," said he, at length, "you speak of things that are beyond me. I understand you not."

"Diplomatic to the last," said the girl, with a laugh, "but it is unnecessary; you have nothing to fear. There are more people in Castile, besides the envoy of the King of England, who are plotting the ruin of Alberoni."

Clifford still looked as if he scarcely understood her language.

"Pshaw," said she. "Why affect mystery with me? How know you, but that with all your claims to dignity of sex, and valour and diplomacy, you are nought but a puppet. One of those who but act when a master spirit pulls the string."

"And who is the master spirit?"

"Would you be astonished if it were I?"

"You!" and the young envoy, in his hurry to give articulation to the first feeling that presented itself, intimated, dis-

tinctly enough, that he thought the vocation too lofty and difficult for the party who appeared to claim it.

"Upon my word, senor," said the lady, with something like pique in her voice, "you are hardly polite in your intonations. Why should I not be the master spirit? Is it because I am a woman? To one who has lived so lately in France, it need not have been matter of astonishment that our sex should rule a kingdom. Why, it is not six months since, the Duchess of Maine nearly overturned the government of that most clear-sighted and most puissant prince the regent Duke of Orleans."

"Very true, fair lady. She tried, but you forgot to add, she failed."

"But how many have succeeded? It is success and not failure, that is the rule. On the other side of the Pyrenees, what ministers have ever exercised the power of Catharine or Mary de Medicis, of the Duchess of Montpensier, or the Duchess of Longueville, or last and greatest, of Madame de Maintenon."

"Ay, but that is in France, where

women take a more prominent place in society. Your Spanish dames live so retired that they do not possess a similar authority."

"Wrong again—always wrong," said his companion, laughing. "If you knew anything of female influence you would know that it is always most powerful when least prominent. To a despotism openly exercised, you men can make opposition. You can offer none to one which does not exhibit itself, and is unknown and unsuspected. Who ruled Spain in Philip II.'s time?—The Princess of Eboli. In Philip IV.'s time?—The Countess of Olivarez. In Charles II.'s time?—Elizabeth of Austria. And who, in the reign of our present most exemplary and wife-loving sovereign, Philip V., but his first spouse, Maria Louisa, the Savoyard, and his second our little gracious but most energetic mistress, Elizabeth Farnese the Parmesan?"

"I give in at once," said Clifford, in an apologetic attitude, and covering his face with both hands. "I resign all pretensions to superiority. I had no conception they

had given me, as a companion, an historical dictionary in saya and mantilla. I am only astonished," continued he, in a meaning tone, "that one whose memory of female domination is so accurate, should have omitted the Princess of Ursins. Is it that Mademoiselle de Chalais chanced to be ignorant of her name?"

"Pooh, pooh!" said his companion, laughing affectedly, as if to cover her embarrassment, "I have not of course told you all. What I did say was merely to give you a small sample of my knowledge. I could, if I chose, astonish you."

"I defy you to be more successful in that way than you have been."

"Don't be too sure," said she; and she held up her finger admonishingly.

"Nay, you alarm me not, I repeat the defiance."

"And I accept it. Do you remember, senor contrabandista," continued she. "the interview, which about a week before you left Paris, you had with Lord Stanhope and Dubois?"

Clifford started and looked at her in dismay.

"Pshaw!" said the girl, laughing at the astonishment expressed in his face. "That is nothing. Do you, more especially, recollect that eventful evening on which you were conducted by the Cardinal to a certain house in a certain street, and to a room in which there was a screen, over which was thrown, alternately, a white handkerchief and a black one. Ha, ha, ha! How well Colonel Clifford went through his drill. No recruit only a week caught could have laboured more zealously. 'Rise up'—'sit down'—'take your hat off'—'put your hat on'—but most of all, do you remember the instructions of Lord Stanhope that you should follow, implicitly, any intimation of his will, especially when it was couched in terms like these," and the young girl drew from the bosom of her dress the mysterious scrawl, which had been produced by Perez at the Moorish tower, and which contained, as before, the words—

"To C. C.,

"Obey the words of the bearer,

"STANHOPE."

"She must be a fairy," muttered the young soldier to himself.

"Of course I am. It is the only rational sentence I have heard you utter. And now, sir cavalier, show your obedience to the mandate of your chief, and begone."

"And can you be so cruel as to ask it? To you, who know so much, it would be affectation to conceal my mission or my purpose here. I came into this country merely as a diplomatic agent, and with no other wish than the ruin of the Cardinal. But you know—you must know that other feelings have since sprung up to which I attach greater importance than the success of my diplomacy. Ah! Donna Teresa! I remember the Somo Sierra and the inn at Buitrago. Have you forgotten them?"

The girl appeared embarrassed.

"This is no time," said she, at length,

" to discuss such follies. Now you must be gone. There is danger here.

" I care not," said Clifford, " I will not move till you tell me who you are ? Till you give me some hope that I shall see you under happier auspices."

" It may not be, Colonel Clifford. I am the granddaughter of one of Spain's proudest nobles—one who would never wed his child to an Englishman, and it were idle to permit hopes, the fruition of which is impossible. But," continued she, hurriedly, as a sound of closing doors came upon her ear, " for the love of the Virgin be gone! Your life is forfeited if you are found here."

" Had I a thousand lives dependant on the risk, I would peril them all, rather than leave this without a pledge that I should see you again."

" O, no, no!" said his agitated companion. " It were madness. For you—for me—it would alike be madness to cherish hopes that could never be realised. But fly," said she, as the sound of distant voices came upon her ear. " For heaven's sake, fly, unless you

would kill me by seeing you butchered before my eyes."

"I care not," said the young soldier, in the accents of resolute despair. "Again, I tell you, I care not. I will not move from hence till you give me hope—till you pledge yourself to see me again."

And he fell upon his knees with the air of one whom fate had chained to the spot.

"Holy Virgin," said the girl, clasping her hands to her temples in the attitude of terror. They are coming, and will murder him. Fly, for it is yet time. I entreat—I beseech you—fly."

"Not one step," said Clifford, "were this spot destined to be my grave. I will not stir one step till you give me a solemn pledge to see me again."

"O, I will—I will," said the terrified girl, extending to him her hand. "Only go."

"You do not deceive me?"

"By our Lady of Atocha—by the Holy Virgin of Pilar—I speak the truth. And

now if you would not see me die at your feet, once more, for it is yet time, fly."

He pressed her hands to his lips. They were abandoned to him, unresistingly. He sprung to his feet and passed his arm around her. His mouth, for an instant, met hers. It may be that the girl was too terrified to offer opposition, for she seemed scarcely conscious of the act, and only once more articulated in trembling accents. "For the love of heaven, be gone."

He hurried to the door, and partially raised the hangings that covered it, but he instantly dropped them again as he caught a glimpse of a group of figures at the far end of the hall.

"It is too late," said he, as he laid his hand upon his sword; "I must sell my life as dearly as I may."

"Holy Mother, no," said the girl. "Would you shed the blood of my kindred? But, ah! a thought strikes me. There is still a chance for safety."

She seized his wrist as she spoke, and hurried him to the side of the room. In

an instant she had raised the tapestry which covered its walls and placed him behind it.

"Stir not," whispered she. "Breathe not. When they are gone I will release you."

Scarcely were the words uttered, when the hangings which covered the door, were pushed aside, and eight or ten men entered the apartment.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CONSPIRATORS.

THE party which entered the room was conducted by a man of about seventy. He was short and stout made, but seemed to feel the advance of years, for he supported himself by a staff which rose nearly as high as his shoulder, and which on its upper end was superbly ornamented with gold and jewels. His dress was in the old Spanish fashion, and of blue velvet. On his head was a broad-brimmed plumed hat. Round his neck he wore the order of the Golden Fleece, and a large and massive gold key was suspended from his girdle.

The men who followed him were apparently of high rank. The richness of their dress, the orders upon their breasts, and more than all a certain air of quiet haughtiness which bespoke their being accustomed each to be the head of his own circle, and the observed of all observers, marked them out as grandees of Spain.

The young girl was still standing on the spot where Clifford had left her, and agonized with terror.

"What do you here, my child," said the old man who was the leader of the party.

"I have been in the garden, my dear grandfather," was the scarcely articulated reply, "and am just returned."

"'Tis well. But now begone, my child. We would be alone. Excellencies," continued he, addressing his companions. "My granddaughter, Donna Teresa Pacheco."

The nobles who accompanied him unbonnetted, and by a profound obeisance acknowledged the presence of the heiress of their host.

The courtesy was replied to by one equally

low on the part of Donna Teresa, and the young lady left the room.

No sooner was she gone than the master of the mansion approached a table in the centre of the apartment which had supported his trembling grandchild. It had obviously been prepared for the reception of guests, as it was covered with a large Turkey carpet, and upon either side were arranged velvet-draped, heavy, high-backed chairs. One with arms, and of a larger size than the others, was placed at the end of the table, and seemed to be intended for the president of the meeting. Towards this the old man who had first entered the apartment led the way, after he had carefully bolted the door, and cast a sharp, quick glance around, as if to assure himself that the chamber was untenanted, except by those who were intended to be its occupants.

"Don Louis De Haro," said he to one of those who had followed him, and who was decorated with the order of the Holy Ghost. "There is your place. In a meeting so important as this, no one is better able to guide

our councils than the heir of the house of Carpio."

"No, Duke of Escalona," said the young man, "I am unworthy of the honour. You, and you only, are entitled to preside over this meeting. Your age, your high rank, your experience in the affairs of government, and most of all, the noble opposition you have made to this Italian mountebank who rules over us, all point you out as the person best entitled to act as our leader, and best qualified to discharge his duties."

A low hum of applause from the surrounding nobles marked their approval of the words of their companion, and the duke accordingly moved to the head of the table. He did not, however, immediately sit down, but remained standing till each of his fellow nobles had assumed his place in front of the chair which he had selected. The old man then raised with great dignity his broad-brimmed plumed hat, and bowed gravely right and left to his companions. The salute was immediately acknowledged. Each head was uncovered, and with a formal salutation

the parties upon either hand bent low in reply to the courtesy.

"Grandees of Spain," said the president, "be covered. It is a privilege that you are entitled to before your sovereign, and it is one that I wish you to exercise now. We are met to-day for no interchange of the courtesies of private life, and it is fit that in discussing public affairs, we should follow in all respects the same strict etiquette which we should take as the rule of our conduct in the king's council chamber. Grandees of Spain, be seated."

With the words the animated statues sank into their places, and their venerable chief once more addressed them.

"Nobles of Spain," continued he, "you know why we are met here. It is now scarce nineteen years since we saw expire in this city the last descendant of the great emperor, the representative of a race that made Spain the first kingdom upon earth, the glory of her own children, and the envy of surrounding nations. To fill the vacant place upon her throne, we selected the grandson

of the Infanta Donna Maria Teresa, the daughter of King Philip IV., of blessed memory. I mean our present sovereign Don Philip. I say we selected him, for though there was a will of Charles II. in his favour, it was only the attachment of the nobles of Spain which enabled him to hold his ground against the English, and the Austrian competitor for his throne. To us, therefore, Don Philip owes his crown. To us, his equals, for all of us are as noble as the king, or more so. He is bound, therefore, in gratitude, to advance the interests of the monarchy, and most of all to respect the privileges of the grandees. Has he done so?"

"He has violated them a thousand times," was the unanimous reply.

"Aye, and that in matters of the last importance," said the Count of Lemos. "He has permitted Tellez Zerclas, the captain of the Walloon Guard, to sit in his presence at chapel, an honour which belongs of right only to the grandees. And were not I and the Duke of Sessa compelled by disgust to resign, he, the captaincy of the Spanish

Guard, and I, that of the Halberdiers, in order that we might not be degraded to the level of the low-born Fleming."

"He has allowed," said the Count of Altamira, "the Controller of the finances to have traces to the leading mules of his carriage six yards long, a thing hitherto unknown, except in equipages of cardinals, ambassadors, and nobles of the first class."

"Worse—worse," said the Duke of Medina del Rio Seco; "he had the insolence to tell me—me who am Hereditary Admiral of Castile, and whose forefathers have been its admirals ever since my royal ancestor Henry III., conceded the office to the house of Henriquez—that I was unfit to take command of the fleet, because I had never been at sea."

"Worst of all," said the Duke of Medina Sidonia, "he makes our rank dependant upon a dress. He has, as you well know, introduced the French costume. What is more intolerable still is, that he insists upon its being worn at court ceremonials. I detest this French dress. I will never de-

grade myself by it; yet what is the price that I am paying for my patriotism. You know that no grandee can claim the privilege of his rank, till he has worn his hat before the king, and yet, because I refused to adopt this new foreign fashion, he would not permit me to perform the ceremonial; and thus I, Don Domenico de Guzman, Commander of the order of Calatrava, Gentleman of the Chamber, Viceroy of Catalonia, Governor of the Palace of the Buen Retiro, and Grand Equerry to the King—I, whose forefathers won Andalusia from the Moor—am denied the dearest prerogative of my rank, because I would not disguise myself in a French periwig and a three-cornered hat."

This moving catalogue of sorrows seemed gradually to have worked upon the feelings of the audience. It became more and more excited, till at length, as the Duke of Medina Sidonia brought his complaint to a close, there was a general murmur of *Muera el Rey*—Death to the Tyrant.

The aged President seemed to listen to

the noisy exclamations of his companions with impatience, and if one might judge from the expression of his countenance, with a slight feeling of contempt. It was with a tone, however, of the most respectful and zealous sympathy that he again addressed them.

"Nobles of Spain," said he, "the acts you have enumerated are no doubt those of gross oppression, but yet they refer to us alone. There are matters which affect not merely our interests, but those of the nation, and to these I would now wish to address your attention. You are aware we have been involved in a war with all Europe. We have had against us France, and Austria, and England, and Sardinia, and the Dutch. Our troops have been slaughtered, our fleets destroyed, and within the last three months even a hostile army has been seen within our confines, and all this to gratify the ambition of a low Italian adventurer."

A general concert of voices pronounced the name of Alberoni.

"Yes, Hidalgos, he is the man. We

must get rid of him. He is not only an enemy to us, but to our sovereign. He keeps Don Philip a prisoner within the walls of the palace, and when but two days back I, in virtue of my office of grand chamberlain, would have approached the king for the purpose of informing him of the discontent of the nobles, the peasant churl dared to lay hands upon me, Don John Pacheco, a knight of the Golden Fleece, and who had been successively viceroy of Navarre, and Arragon, and Catalonia, and Sicily, and Naples. By my honour, as a noble gentleman, I paid him for his insolence. But that he was a priest I should have struck the low-born hound with my dagger."

"Yes, his insolence is intolerable. He must be got rid of," said the Count of Lemos, who seemed to act as the spokesman of his companions.

"Upon that point at least," replied the Duke of Escalona, "we are all agreed. The only doubt is with regard to the best mode of carrying the idea into effect."

"And yet," rejoined the count, "it seems to me most simple. In the old times, Alphonso the Chaste, King of Arragon, had a minion for his minister. Again and again, like Don Philip, had he been warned of the evil qualities of his favourite, and again and again he set their remonstrances at defiance. What then did my ancestor and the other Arragonese nobles? When they put the crown upon his head, they said to him, 'YOU WHO ARE NO BETTER THAN US WE MAKE OUR KING. SO LONG AS YOU RULE JUSTLY WE WILL OBEY YOU, BUT IF NOT—NOT.' These were no empty words. They acted as they had spoken. They seized upon their childlike monarch and his parasite, and in an hour after, the headsman had done his work, and the citizens of Saragossa saw a head rolling on the scaffold. Why should not Philip and his insolent priest be treated after a similar fashion."

The violent counsel seemed to meet the sympathies of the assembled nobles, for it was received with acclamation. Escalona alone listened to it coldly and in silence.

"No, your excellencies," said he, when the applauding murmurs had subsided, "much as I admire the chivalrous boldness of the Count of Lemos and his straightforward policy I must oppose it, for it would be unsuccessful. In the old wild times he alludes to, the conduct of the grandees was such as the emergency required. It would not now be attended with the same auspicious results. There has sprung up of late years such a devotion to the royal person, that it would be vain to hope that the nation would countenance any attempt against it. When such has been made it has invariably failed. I will not go back so far as the time of the great emperor and the unfortunate revolt of the Padillas, I will confine myself to the present reign. Fourteen years ago the Count of Leganez attempted to overturn the government of our present sovereign. It was in vain. Nay, last year, three of the most powerful nobles of the kingdom, the Dukes of Veraguas and Las Torres, and the Marquis of Aguilar, again made an effort to seize upon the person of the king, for the

purpose of deposing him and putting the Prince of Asturias on the throne. But they were, like their predecessors, unsuccessful; and why? Because the public voice would give no sanction to the violence. No, if we would cope with the Italian we must cope with him after a more pacific manner than that which the Count of Lemos has recommended. We must make his dismissal the act of the king himself."

"And how," said, in an excited tone, Don Louis de Haro, "is such a feat to be accomplished; Philip, as you yourself said, and correctly, is kept a prisoner in the palace, and if we are not to employ open force, as Don Salvador de Castro has recommended, by what other means are we to approach him, so as to make even an appeal to his justice."

"It is precisely to that point," said the Duke of Escalona, in a calm tone, "that I now address myself. I need hardly say, your excellencies, that the subject which is now before us, has deeply occupied my mind, and I have long since been satisfied that the

only way of getting rid of the obnoxious favourite is by having as our ally some one who enjoys confidential intercourse with his Majesty, and who is able to state to him the just grievances of his subjects, and depict in its proper colours the bitter hatred with which they view the supremacy of the Italian."

"And where," said the Count of Lemos, "will you find among the grandees such a person, when the king himself is so secluded that even you, the most distinguished ornament of his court, and who besides, have the right of entry in virtue of your office of grand chamberlain, were not permitted to approach him."

"I have thought over the grandees," said the Duke of Escalona, with a smile, "and I confess I can find none likely to be fortunate enough to obtain the privilege."

"Your excellency confesses then, that your scheme too is a failure."

"By no means."

"You speak in riddles, Duke of Escalona," said Don Louis de Haro, with something of

irritation, "and they are beyond our expounding. So we must wait with patience till he who has framed the labyrinth, should furnish us with a clue to its mazes."

"I am about to do so now," said the aged president, with a good-humoured smile, "and I trust, to prove to you that I have not spoken lightly. Yet the mystery was no deep one. If Philip V. has carefully avoided associating with the grandees, are there none whose compánionship he clings to."

"Yes," shouted a chorus of voices—"a woman or a priest?"

"Precisely; and therefore it is, that by a woman or a priest we must destroy the supremacy of Alberoni."

"It cannot be a woman," said Don Louis de Haro, "for the queen will allow none to address him but herself, and we look in vain for her aid, for it is notorious that she, a Princess of Parma, gives her whole support to the peasant priest, who shares with her the honour of an Italian birthplace."

"Don Louis de Haro is right," said the

duke, "and there is no woman within the palace at the present hour, save Elizabeth Farnese, who can rule the king's mind. Yet there is one beyond it. All of you remember well Anne de la Tremouille, the camarera mayor to the late queen. You know how, for twelve long years she ruled with success this kingdom, and how, again and again, when the English troops and the Austrians were in possession of Madrid, and three-fourths of our provinces, she supported the drooping courage of the king, forced him even against his will, to continue the contest, and gave him almost unwillingly the throne. You know too, by what gross treachery Alberoni had her expelled the kingdom. Well, your excellencies, I had it from a sure source that her influence over the mind of Philip, were she present to exercise it, would be now as great as ever. Upon this knowledge I acted; and about a year since, I sent to her in France, a member of my family to endeavour to induce her to return to Madrid and resume her old supremacy."

"And what," cried a dozen anxious voices, "was the reply?"

"Alas! the mission failed. Five tedious years of sorrow have destroyed her energies. She gave, I need hardly say, her best wishes for our success, and her aid in our favour at the court of France, but she declined to support our views in the only efficient manner in which they could be supported, by herself returning to Madrid."

"Your plans too, then," said the Count of Lemos, "have failed."

"Not altogether," said the duke. "They have failed with the woman, but the noble count will recollect that I had two strings to my bow. I have succeeded with the priest."

"And he is— "

"D'Aubenton."

"The father confessor?"

"Even so. You are aware that Alberoni promised the Jesuit a Cardinal's hat, and like a true Italian broke his word. It was whispered to me, that there existed under

the black robe, feelings towards the minister which were not those of charity. Upon this hint I spoke."

"And what was the result of the conference?"

"Short, but decisive. The Jesuit has promised to obtain the dismissal of the Cardinal, and the restoration of the grandees to office, and I on our part gave him a solemn pledge that we should obtain for him from his Holiness the wished-for purple."

"And when," said Don Louis de Haro, "are we to witness this most auspicious event."

"In a few days, or it may be in a few hours."

"We must be active, then," said the Count of Lemos.

"On the contrary," said the Duke of Escalona, "I must request of the noble count and of your excellencies to do nothing. The Cardinal is suspicious. He is lavish of wealth, and is well served. His spies are everywhere, and should he obtain the slightest

hint of what is at present contemplated, the result might be, not the dismissal of the minister, but that of the father confessor, and with it I will not say danger to ourselves, for I will not degrade Castilian nobles by supposing that they shrink from facing the peril, but what is far worse, the continued supremacy in Spain of a low-born minister, foreign alike in his habits, his language, and his objects, to the Spanish nation."

"Heaven grant," said the Count of Lemos, "that the plan which your excellency has devised may be successful; and yet, I say it without offence, it appears to me but little honourable to the grandees of Spain to be indebted for their freedom from tyranny, not to their own swords, but to the juggling of a foreign shaveling."

"Content you in that, my young colleague," said the duke, with a smile. "If the juggling of the foreign shaveling be successful, the swords of the grandees will lose none of their efficacy from it, for one of the first acts of the new government will be

to restore the Count of Lemos to his old command of the body guard."

"I would ask," said the young noble, "no better fortune."

"It may be, too," said the duke, "that the first exercise of your restored office will be to arrest our old enemy the Cardinal."

"Nay, as for that," said the count, laughing, "if I once saw him on his way to Segovia, I could almost find it in my heart to forgive Zerclas and his Walloons having the luck of the job. Though that would be a hard matter too; for every Sunday I feel my bile rise, as if it would choke me, when I see the rogue of a Fleming, scarce sober from his Saturday night's debauch, squat himself down upon the bench in the royal chapel, with as cool indifference as if he had been accustomed all his life to sit in a king's presence, like a grandee of Spain."

"And now my friends," said the duke, once more resuming his address, "I will, for the present, bid you farewell. I scarce need tell you to be silent. Do more. Hold no conferences, interchange no greetings, and

regulate even the expression of your features, for the adversary with whom you have to contend has a thousand ears, and, as my worthy little priest Don Jerome used to phrase it, 'a bird of the air may carry the matter.'"

The old man left his seat as he spoke, and raising his hat, bent gravely right and left to his companions. They returned the salute, and with formal courtesy. The plumed broad-brimmed sombreros were then once more replaced, and each in his turn bowing profoundly, left the room. One only, the Count of Saldagna, remained; but he, when the master of the house was about to follow the example of his guests, laid his hand upon the arm of the aged noble, and the duke, in obedience to the signal, resumed his seat.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE MAN BEHIND THE ARRAS.

We must return to our friend Clifford. It is difficult to paint his feelings during the conference the details of which we have just chronicled. It may be recollected that he had taken refuge behind the hangings of the tapestry; and as the assembled nobles entertained no suspicion of any one being in their neighbourhood, and spoke in their usual tone as a matter of course, the envoy of Lord Stanhope heard every word that was uttered.

It can be easily imagined how great was his surprise when he learned that his un-

welcome visitors had met together for the express purpose of endeavouring to carry into effect the very object for which he himself had been sent into Spain—the fall of Alberoni.

His first impulse was to have emerged from his hiding-place, and asked a share in councils which coincided so precisely with his mission. But this line of conduct was abandoned upon reflection. His instructions were marked 'private and confidential.' He was allowed to place himself in communication only with the ambassador of Parma, the father confessor, and the queen. His chances of success with one and all depended upon the secrecy observed in approaching them, and that would be endangered by communicating his plans to the conspirators. True, they were nobles of Spain, and, as he believed, honourable men; but still they were numerous; and if in a multitude of councillors there is safety, in a multitude of secret-keepers there is peril at least for the secret. He determined, therefore, to keep his place of concealment.

There was yet another reason for this. He might possibly compromise his fair companion by his appearance. How was he to account for it? How could he excuse his having found his way into another man's house, or give any satisfactory reasons for having concealed himself in one of its private apartments? He had no choice, then, but to remain where he was.

Nevertheless, it may well be supposed with what intense eagerness he listened to the speakers. And yet the subject that fascinated him was neither the discontent of the Spanish nobles with the supremacy of Alberoni, nor the promised support of the father confessor, both so favourable to his success. What interested him the most was the remark that fell from the lips of the Duke of Escalona, that he had sent a member of his family to France to communicate with the Princess of Ursins; and that that lady, though she refused to return to Spain, had, nevertheless, used all her influence at the French court to support the plans of the conspirators. Was Donna Teresa the

member of his family spoken of by the duke? Was the Princess of Ursins the lady behind the screen for whose approval he had been submitted by the Cardinal Dubois?

Such were the speculations that employed the mind of the young envoy, and mixed themselves up with the details of the plans which, from time to time, fell from the conspirators. At length the conference approached its close, and it was with eager ear and throbbing heart that Clifford heard the departure of its members.

"Now," said he to himself, as he listened to each footstep, "in a few minutes I shall be free, and I have at least gained something by my morning's work. I knew before of D'Aubenton's ill-treatment by Alberoni. I know now something more. The Jesuit seems to be born under a lucky star, for the grandees have promised him a Cardinal's hat, and I hold for him a similar promise from the Duke of Orleans. It would be strange if the fellow after all missed his red stockings. But now the hall must be cleared. In another minute I shall be free."

His hopes were doomed to be disappointed. It will be recollected that when Escalona was about to leave the room, a relative of his, the Count of Saldagna, gently laid his hand upon his arm, and detained him in the chamber.

"Well, Silva," said the old duke, with a laugh, "what would you? Your communication, I suppose, is no treason, and we can discuss it in a more comfortable apartment than this."

His companion replied by holding up his finger, as if to warn him of some danger.

"Pacheco," said he, "I fear we have had more ears to listen to us than we counted on. Twice or thrice during our conference it occurred to me that I saw the tapestry move opposite where I am sitting."

"Ha!" said the duke, as he laid his hand upon his sword, "that is a matter I will soon set to rights."

"Not a foot," said the Count of Saldagna, and he grasped firmly the arm of his companion. "You do not stir a foot. If the fellow be a master of his weapon, he may

chance to escape, and put half the grandees of Spain at the mercy of Alberoni. We must play a surer game."

"But how? To summon the servants would be but to betray ourselves, for the first act of the eavesdropper would be to proclaim to the menials the secrets of the conference he had listened to, and demand to be taken before the Cardinal. And to you, Silva, as a relative, I may say, though I blush to utter it, such is the power of the gold of the wily Italian, that even in his own house Don John Pacheco is not secure of the fidelity of his own domestics. We must, I repeat, do the work ourselves. It is the only guarantee for secresy."

There was silence for about a minute. It was broken by the Count of Saldagna.

"It is too great a risk," said he. "Ha! now I think of it I have a plan which will settle the matter at once. Do you recollect, Don John, when you were viceroy of Naples, that a galley of the knights of Malta came into port, having on board three beautiful Circassian women, whom they had taken at

sea in a Turkish brigantine. The Grand Signor had intended the girls for a present to the bey of Tunis, and they had been captured ere they reached their destination. You redeemed them, and sent them to the Turk. Do you remember what the Osmanli gave you in return?"

"Well," said Escalona; "two black slaves, with the sinews and ferocity of bulls, whom he used to employ as his private executioners, and whose silence he had insured by cutting their tongues out. By St. Isidro, they are the very men for our purpose. Wait here, and I will fetch them. And talk as to yourself, and aloud. I should be sorry that the stag broke cover ere we had the hounds ready to lay at his flanks."

With the words the old noble left the room, and his companion, in accordance to his instructions, began to pace backwards and forwards, speaking at intervals, and in a sufficiently loud tone to make his presence known to the prisoner behind the arras.

That prisoner was in no comfortable state of feeling. He had not, to be sure, heard

what had passed between the two old nobles, because the Count of Saldagna had intentionally pitched his voice at so low a note, that it was impossible to catch what was said. But though the words were inaudible, the general intonation of the voices came upon the ear, and their whispering tone, the caution used in the communication, and the lingering in the apartment of the master of the house after his guests had departed, all suggested to Clifford that his presence had been discovered or suspected. What was to be done was the question. His first resolve was to rush out and force his way to the street. But this could not be effected without violence, probably not without bloodshed. What was worst of all was, his opponent was likely to be the old man, who was apparently the master of the house, and whom Therese had addressed as her grandfather. Any injury to him would, of course, mar the success of his suit, and escape on such conditions possessed no charms. Confused and hesitating, the young soldier knew not what to do; and, ere he had

formed a decision, the Duke of Escalona returned.

The old man was accompanied by two gigantic blacks. They were in the prime of life, and their appearance seemed to justify the confidence placed in them by their Turkish master, for their thews and muscles evidenced immense strength, while the ill-repressed fierceness of their dark eye, marked them out as the nature-born ministers of crime. They were dressed in turbans of crimson silk, and wore caftans or loose robes of cloth of the same colour, embroidered on the edge with gold lace. The garments came scarcely below the knee, and had their large sleeves looped up as high as the shoulder. A shawl confined them at the waist. There were sandals upon their feet, gold pendants in their ears, and a thick ring of the same metal round their necks; but beyond that, dress they had none, for the legs and arms were bare. Each carried a short-handled bright axe, with a large curved edge, in his right hand, and a small coil of rope in his left.

As soon as the duke had entered he bolted the door. "Now, Saldagna," said he, "we are ready for the game." With the words he drew his sword, and, intimating to the blacks by a motion of his finger that they should remain near the entrance of the room, he commenced with his companion his scrutiny.

It is difficult to paint the feelings of Clifford, as he heard the two nobles raising the tapestry along the wall, and became conscious of their gradual approach by the rustling of that portion of it which enveloped him, and which, disturbed by the stirring of the distant hangings, began to move and tremble, as if in sympathy with him it covered. At length the motions of the arr s became more and more decided; it was raised, and Clifford and the master of the mansion stood face to face.

The young man made no movement. He had long decided on his line of conduct, and now, with his arms folded on his breast, he stood before his captors, and, with a calm, self-possessed eye, awaited their acts.

It is probable that if he had shown any sign, either of violence or timidity, the two nobles would have proceeded at once to extremities; but there was something in the lofty bearing and dauntless courage of their prisoner which awakened their respect; for, after looking at him some time in silence, the Duke of Escalona raised his hat gravely, but with courtesy, and said—.

"Senor caballero, we would have conference with you."

He turned as he spoke, and once more resumed his place under the canopy, and, motioning to the Count of Saldagna to take the chair near him, he beckoned to Clifford to approach.

The young soldier obeyed.

"Now, senor caballero," said the old noble, "this is my house. I have not the honour of your acquaintance. Will you have the kindness to inform me to what I am indebted for your presence in it?"

There was no answer.

"It is as I suspected," continued the duke. "You give no reason. Will you

allow me to supply the deficiency, and answer for you? You came hither to spy out the acts of honourable men."

There was still no reply.

The old noble seemed to become irritated. "Traitor," said he, "do you deny this? But you will do so, for you fear for your miserable life!"

The young envoy flushed. The charge of cowardice seemed to have shaken his resolution of silence, for he said, "I do deny it; but, your excellency will pardon me for adding, if, indeed, it be to the Duke of Escalona I have now the honour of addressing myself, not for the reason you have assigned for it."

"For what reason, then?" said the duke, sarcastically. "Will you do me the favour of communicating it to the Count of Saldagna and to myself?"

"Simply that it is not my habit to play the part of an eavesdropper!"

"Do you pretend, then, to allege," said his irritated host, "that there have not been several parties lately in this room, and that

they held conference on matters not intended for your ear?"

"I am aware of both the facts intimated by your excellency."

"You will probably, however," said the duke, with a bitter smile, "soften the confession by informing us that you caught little of what they said."

"On the contrary. I heard every word."

"Indeed," said the duke. "And will you favour us with the object of the conference?"

"The dismissal of Alberoni, by the aid of the father confessor."

The two nobles looked at each other for a moment, as if uncertain how to act.

"The plot you speak of," said the count of Saldagna, "was a dangerous one. Who are the men that were bold enough to undertake to execute it?"

"The grandees of Spain," replied the young envoy.

"Will you favour us with the names of the conspirators?"

"That is beyond my power, but I can

give you the names of some of those who were present."

"And they were—"

"The Count of Lemos, the Duke of Medina Sidonia, and Don Louis de Haro."

"By the Virgin," said the aged master of the house, addressing the Count of Saldagna, "whatever be the faults of our new friend, want of frankness is not of the number. And what," continued he, turning to the prisoner, and assuming a stern look, "do you expect will be the fate of him who has thrust himself upon the secrets of a plot, so momentous to the safety of those engaged in it?"

Clifford made no answer.

"Do you hear me, senor caballero?" said the duke. "What, I say, do you expect will be your fate?"

Still the young envoy was silent. And again the question was repeated, and in a louder tone.

Clifford mused deeply. He spoke at length—

"Duke of Escalona," said he, "you ask me

what I expect will be my fate. I answer that it will depend less upon my own act than upon the feelings of my judges, If I had fallen into the hands of a mere plotter I should have foretold it at once. Such men listen only to their suspicions. They would have held me merely as a spy, and they would have paid me with a spy's wages—the headsman and the block."

"And why," said the duke, in a tone of surprise, "should not I treat you thus?"

"Because Don John Pacheco is no mere plotter. He is recognized in Spain as the model of every knightly virtue; and honourable himself, he is little disposed to doubt the honour of others."

The great noble, old as he was, flushed with pleasure at the compliment. The feeling, however, was but momentary, and in even a colder tone than usual, he resumed—

"And if," said he, "a man had this high-minded confidence in another's honour, what would be his conduct?"

"He would accept," said Clifford, "the pledge of his prisoner that he knew nothing

of any intention to frame the plot he had listened to; and that having heard it involuntarily, he would keep it secret as the grave, and having received such pledge, would let his prisoner go."

"The counsel," said the old man, in a sarcastic tone, "is worthy of the Cid, but to be acted on with safety, it must be exercised in favour of an honourable man—"

"I am such."

"And of high lineage—"

"My race, Don John Pacheco, is as noble as your own."

"And a man with a name—"

Clifford was silent.

"Ha!" said the Count of Saldagna; "has this far-descended chivalrous gentleman no designation? But I scarce expected it, for I am indifferently well acquainted with the appearance of our hidalgos, and I never saw any in the Gallery of Pictures who resembled the caballero. Perhaps," he continued, in a taunting accent, "he was there, as here, concealed behind the arras?"

"Count of Saldagna," said Clifford, haughtily, "it is scarce worthy the blood of Silva to insult a prisoner. But I repeat what I stated, that if I am permitted to go hence unharmed, I pledge you my word as a cavalier that I never will reveal to mortal ear the secrets of this meeting. I repeat that I was present at it involuntarily, and I further add, that I pledge you my word that when I entered this chamber I had not the most distant idea of the scene of which I was about to be the witness."

"Indeed!" said the Duke of Escalona sarcastically. "And wherefore, then, came you hither? Ha!" continued he, "a light breaks in upon me. There may be another cause, and a blacker one, to explain your presence. Silva," continued he, in an agitated voice, "my granddaughter was in the apartment when we entered. This may be a matter a thousand times worse than the discovery of a conspiracy. Speak, traitor!" and he turned towards Clifford with a face convulsed with passion. "Speak, I say; though I degrade my house by giving even

utterance to such a thought. Came you hither to see Donna Teresa Pacheco?"

Clifford was silent.

"You speak not," continued the old noble, trembling with excitement. "You dare not speak. Yet I must have an answer, if I tear it from your heart. Reply then, at once, or I put you to death where you stand." And the old man drew his sword, and hurried towards his captive.

The Count of Saldagna threw himself upon his arm, and arrested his steps.

"Are you mad, Pacheco?" said he. "Know you what you do?"

"Well, well. I would avenge the honour of my house. Unhand me, Silva," continued he. "By heavens, I shall hold even you as my enemy if you attempt to bar my vengeance in such a cause."

"Yes, Count of Saldagna," said Clifford, "leave the Duke of Escalona to strike his blow. I respect him for his anger, for I, like him, would strike dead any one who doubted the honour of Donna Teresa Pacheco."

"Ha!" said the old noble, "do you say this?" and he paused for a moment, as if in doubt and surprise, but in another minute suspicion returned. "No," continued he. "You do not buy me, senor caballero, with fair words. But this is a matter of grave import, and I would treat it with the gravity that it deserves."

He sheathed his sword as he spoke, and resumed his seat under the canopy. "And now, senor caballero," continued he, in a solemn tone, "listen to me, and with attention, for your life depends upon the answer. I am the master of this house, the head of a family which yields to none for rank, or power, or wealth, in this kingdom. Sons I have none, for the Count of Gormas and the Marquis of Moya are both dead, and my only descendant and my heir is the young girl whom I found in this chamber when I entered it. It would kill me were I to suppose that that girl's fair fame were not as unsullied as her race. Now, boy, hear me. Swear to me upon the holy cross that you have never spoken to that girl, that you

have never addressed to her look, or sign, or letter, and you shall go hence free, after remaining some few days in honourable custody, so as to assure the safety of my colleagues, for a little time must prove the plot's failure or success."

"And what," said Clifford, "if I refuse the oath, is the alternative?"

"Then," said the old man, flushing crimson, and rising from his chair, as if to give additional effect to his words, "as sure as there is a God in heaven, you shall die before you leave this room. And now, senor caballero, give me your oath?"

Clifford was silent.

The old noble became agitated.

"Speak," said he, in a trembling voice. "Have respect, at least, to grey hairs and a father's sorrow. Swear me the oath?"

"I repeat but what I said before," said the young envoy, and his voice trembled; "there is not an angel in heaven more pure than Donna Teresa, and I myself would put any man to death who dared to whisper a word of slander against her."

"The oath! the oath!" muttered the old man, in an agitated tone. "I must have the oath!"

Clifford was again silent.

"Traitor! seducer! Do you refuse it?"

"I have replied already, and I cannot add to or change my words."

"Again I ask you, and for the last time. Do you refuse the oath?" And the words were spoken in a cold tone, as if some coming resolve had calmed his passion.

Clifford felt the influence of the voice, and understood it, but it did not change his resolution. For a moment, indeed, a slight shiver came over him, but the weakness, if it were one, vanished as rapidly as it came, for he drew himself up to his full height, folded his arms on his breast, and fixing his haughty eyes upon his host, said in the accents of one who foresaw his fate, and was prepared to meet it,—

"Don John Pacheco, you have had your answer."

The old man looked at him for a while as if he had scarcely expected the resolve, but

in another instant anger resumed its place, and the duke again spoke, but in a voice whose words fell each from his lips as distinct as drops of water.

"Young man," said he, "you have kept your resolution, and I will abide by mine. Three hundred years ago, Don Alphonso Pacheco, Marquis of Villenas, for deeds of valour done against the Moors, received from King Henry, the fourth of the name, the power of doing justice in his own house upon his enemies and his vassals. That power still exists in the race of Pacheco, and I am about to exercise it now. On this day, and in this room, shall ye die."

"Would you murder me like a dog?" said the young soldier, agitated, even in spite of himself, at his approaching fate.

"Fear it not," said the old man. "Such a death suits neither my justice nor you. You say you are noble. As a noble shall be your doom. Do you see," continued he, pointing to one of the blacks at the door, "that slave with the axe in his hand?" He was the public executioner when I was Vice-

roy of Naples, and in virtue of his office, sundry heads of knightly rank, and of the proudest of the Neapolitan grandees, fell beneath his axe. 'Tis he that is to do the work on you. You shall die, then, not as a peasant, but as, what you tell me you are, a hidalgo."

He stopped, and for some time silence reigned in the chamber. It was broken by the Count of Saldagna.

"My dear friend," continued he, "this is a sudden and a fearful tragedy. I pray you bethink you well before you act it."

"Not a word, Silva," said the old man, authoritatively. "In such a matter as this I am the sole judge. I repeat, then, not a word."

"But would you," continued his aged companion, "have him die unconfessed, without the consolations of Holy Church?"

"No," said the duke, after reflecting for a moment. "I would not kill both body and soul. I remind me, that when the never-to-be-forgotten Juan de Padilla was condemned to death, they allowed him to live

till sundown, that he might hear the Ave Maria, and be comforted. So shall it be with this boy. When the sun has set, and the blessed bell that speaks to all Catholic hearts the solace of religion has tolled from the church, then shall he die."

Scarcely were the words uttered, when the door of the music gallery overhead was heard to shut with a sharp, quick sound, as if some one had departed, and in their anxiety to leave the chamber had forgot the caution which had marked them while its occupant.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE PRIEST AND THE DUENNA.

We must change the scene to another chamber in the palace of the Duke of Escalona.

It may be in the recollection of our readers that the Cardinal had accidentally ascertained from his confident and school-mate, that he was acquainted with one of the household of the Grand Chamberlain. The intimacy was, in fact, much greater than Di Castro had been willing to allow. Some thirty years before the time of which we write the canon of St. Jago, then a young man of one and twenty, and just admitted to priests' orders, chanced to be in Naples, and had been

selected as confessor by a fair widow. The lady in after years became the governess of the granddaughter of the Duke of Escalona, when Viceroy of Naples. She had followed her charge to Spain as her duenna; and thither, when the friendship of Alberoni and his increasing power, had enabled him to provide for the companion of his youth, came also her admirer Benedict Di Castro. It is needless to say that the old intimacy was renewed. He was received with open arms, and the worthy priest reinstated in all his privileges as father confessor.

The only cloud that dimmed their happiness, or rather the happiness of the lady, for we are obliged to confess that the gentleman bore the misfortune with Christian philosophy, was the bigotry of the Duke of Escalona. He detested Alberoni, and a true Spaniard, his power of hating was wonderful. Unhappily for the devotions of Donna Violante, his dislike was not limited to the Cardinal, but was extended to his household, and indeed to his countrymen. In the case of Benedict Di Castro the hostility was

carried even further. The old noble had been informed through the jealousy of an ecclesiastic of his establishment, who resented a foreign shaveling poaching on his manor, that Father Benedict, as he was called, was a confidential friend of the hated Prime Minister. This was quite sufficient to raise to boiling heat the already too fervent blood of the irritable chief of the Pachecos. Di Castro was forbidden the house, and the exclusion was accompanied by a gentle hint that the Duke of Escolona enjoyed in his signorial capacity the right of pit and gallows, and that in the event of the Italian priest intruding himself within the forbidden limits, it was not impossible that Don John Pacheco might forget his cloth, and re-exert that privilege of sending men to the other world, for the use or abuse of which, to confess the truth, the hot-headed old grandee when Viceroy of Naples, had been a little too famous.

. Had the Duke of Escalona known as much of love affairs as of viceroyalties, he would have spared himself all this trouble.

It was a blunder to endeavour to prevent Donna Violante seeing her priestly admirer. It was worse than insanity to threaten to make life the price of the interview. The lady had become less loving, the gentleman had long been indifferent, but the difficulty and the danger restored their affection at once to its full fervour, and gave it the air of a romance; and, being forbidden to meet at any time they resolved as a matter of course to meet frequently.

After all, the obstacles to be surmounted were not so formidable; at least the woman's wit of Donna Violante found a way of evading them.

The palace of the Duke of Escalona stood as we have mentioned in the Calle de Toledo in the immediate neighbourhood of the Puerta del Sol. A portion of the building was of great age, and was said to go back as far as the days of the Moors. Of the ancient structure, the banqueting hall, in which had taken place the meeting of Clifford and Therese was a portion. Over the door, as we have mentioned, was a gallery

now occupied by musicians on occasions of ceremony. Its original destination, if tradition was to be believed, was different. It was said to have been intended for the reception of the ladies of the harem of its original lords, as a place from which they, themselves unseen, could survey the revels and revellers beneath. What gave support to the rumour was the fact that the gallery in front was separated from the hall by a screen of walnut-wood, carved in the fantastic patterns in which Arabesque delights, and which while it was sufficiently open, to permit the tenants of the unlighted gallery to see what was passing in the room below, was still dark enough to prevent any one in the chamber itself, seeing, or even guessing at the presence of those above.

The place was seldom used, for the Duke of Escalona, from age, had given up festive meetings, and the narrow unlighted chamber was thus visited at rare intervals. Superstition too added to its solitude. It was whispered that a lady of the harem, of high rank had there in a fit of jealousy stabbed a

beautiful female slave, who had dared to signify her presence to some cavalier beneath by thrusting a handkerchief through one of the narrow openings. Thus, doubly guarded by its visionary horrors, and by neglect, the place was rarely approached, and its loneliness marked it out to the suggestive mind of Donna Violante as a safe rendezvous, for herself, and the forbidden Di Castro.

When the plan had been once decided on, the worthy dame with all her usual energy, lost no time in carrying it into execution. She contrived to abstract from the bunch of the too confiding Major Domo, the key of the gallery door; had its exact counterpart made by a blacksmith in the neighbourhood, and restored the original without its absence having been discovered. As soon as she had ascertained that the new key fitted exactly, she procured a second edition of it from the artizan who had fabricated the first, and had it conveyed to Di Castro. From that day the dark nook had been the constant place of meeting of Donna Violante and her confessor.

In truth a better could hardly have been selected, as the banqueting room stood at the extreme end of the palace of the Duke of Escalona, and the door of the gallery opened from a small dark chamber connected by a corridor with a suite of rooms beyond; a spiral staircase in the thickness of the wall led to the garden below, while that in its turn opened into the street, by a portal fastened on the inside with a bolt, which the wily duenna took care should be withdrawn on the day and hour when she expected her visitor.

Di Castro, we have said, had mentioned to Alberoni that he had been informed by his old friend of her return from France, and had received in consequence instructions to renew the acquaintance immediately, and elicit, if possible, the object of the journey, and more especially to ascertain if it were connected with the intrigues of Lord Stanhope and the English envoy. In obedience to these injunctions he had sent to the duenna a messenger, requesting an interview at their old rendezvous.

The answer was, to a certain degree, fa-

vourable. Donna Violante would be delighted to see Father Benedict; but she had suffered from the fatigues of travelling, thought the gallery too cold, and preferred receiving him in her own private apartment. She added, that there was nothing to prevent his coming there with safety, as her young lady was about to spend the forenoon abroad, and the duke had of late shut himself up entirely in his own room, and saw no one. The time fixed for the interview was shortly after mid-day, as at that hour the inhabitants of the palace would have betaken themselves to their siesta, and the gallery and hall would be deserted.

With these instructions Di Castro literally complied; and about an hour before Clifford had left the Colle de la Cabeza, the priest made his way to the apartment of Donna Violante.

The worthy dame had appropriated for her own use a handsome room at the back of the house looking upon the gardens. Like those occupied by ladies of a certain age, it was redolent of comfort. The cushions of

its chairs were of the softest—its Turkey carpet thick in its pile—the curtains of its windows of heavy velvet—the brazier in its centre filled with charcoal. These are the luxuries of coming age, and an attention to them for the most part marks its approach. But Violante, though verging "on the sear and yellow leaf," was still a woman; and every woman, whatever be her years, has a green spot in her heart, in which flourish unwithered the romantic feelings of her youth. The worthy duenna had not outlived their influence; and upon the table near her, flaunted some pieces of Dresden china, which represented the ancient Arcadia —at least as Arcadia was represented in the eighteenth century. Shepherds, in green velvet coats and knee breeches, flowered waistcoats, long periwigs, and lace cravats, knelt at the feet of shepherdesses in hoops and jewelled stomachers, and high-heeled shoes; while a guitar, with a flaming ribbon of great breadth attached to it, lay by the side of the pastoral bijouterie of the table, and, with a lace mantilla of the newest pat-

tern, showed that the lady had not as yet resigned her claims to enthral all hearts and charm all eyes.

To this apartment Di Castro made his way without obstacle. The usual greetings were paid, the usual assurances uttered, that neither party had ever looked so well, or since their last meeting appeared a day older. When these conventionalities had been duly discharged, the wily priest set about attaining the real object of his visit. But in this he was scarcely so successful as he had hoped; not from any reserve on the part of the duenna, but simply because she had not been trusted, and had little to tell. As to the French portion of her visit, her reminiscences were a mere blank. She could not speak the language, and was too old to learn it; and all the information she could give to her ecclesiastical admirer, was that, after accompanying her charge to Paris, she had returned immediately to Bayonne, and had there for the past year lived in a very quiet way, in a dirty street, in a dull part of the town.

On the incidents of the journey, however, she was more eloquent. She described the meeting with Clifford at Irun—his joining their party at the request of Donna Teresa —his gallantry at the Somo Sierra—and more especially (for what woman from the sunny South is not eloquent on the subject?) she dilated with Italian energy upon the great beauty of his person. Of his real rank, it was not difficult to discover she was entirely ignorant; and, of course, her companion took no trouble to enlighten her with his suspicions on the subject.

"And so, Donna Violante," continued De Castro, "this young man, this contrabandista that you speak of, was very handsome?"

"Oh, more than handsome, Father Benedict," said the impassioned Neapolitan, clasping her hands and turning up her eyes; "he was positively beautiful—a perfect St. Sebastian."

"Ah, cruel," said the priest, taking her hand, and squeezing it gently; "if you

speak after that fashion I shall be jealous, miserable, wretched."

"Deceiver!" said the lady; and she accompanied the words by giving her admirer a gentle tap on the fingers with her fan.

"Ah, 'tis all very well," continued the priest, "to endeavour to turn the tables on me; but I am not to be so gulled. It is clear enough that this squire of dames has made an impression upon more hearts than one."

"How can you talk so?" said the dame, bridling with pleasure, and fanning herself violently. "You forget, Father Benedict, that he is but a boy, and I am an old woman."

"And how can you talk so?" was the gallant reply. "When I knew you first there was not a fairer dame in the Toledo, and your eyes are as bright and as killing as ever. Ah, faithless, faithless Donna Violante."

"No, constant—ever constant. I do not deny but that the lad did occasionally," and the blushing dowager hid her face with her

fan, "look as if he did think those eyes of mine merited the praises you bestow upon them; but I gave him no encouragement—none whatever. I thought of you, my dear Benedict, and was true."

Di Castro made sundry grimaces, intended to express that he still entertained suspicions. "And this young man," said he at length, "was merely a contrabandista?"

"Yes; but such a contrabandista. He had as gallant a bearing as if he had been a grandee; and then he had such bright laughing blue eyes, and beautiful auburn hair, and teeth like pearls, and such a lovely mouth, and a skin as white as a girl's neck. *O, caro mio, era bello—era bellissimo—bellissimo.*" And once more the enthusiastic dame clasped her hands in the ardour of her admiration.

"I knew it—I was sure of it," said the priest, in affected pique. "It does seem that it was impossible for any woman to resist him, for a blind man might see that the fellow has robbed me of your heart, Violante."

"Now do not be foolish with your jealousy, Benedict," said the dame, as she leant over and imprinted a conciliatory kiss upon his cheek. "You men never understand women; and when we describe the feelings of others, you fancy we but picture our own. Ungrateful fellow!" continued she, casting a loving glance at her admirer; "my constancy never swerved, no not for one small instant. I will not say so much for the indifference of Donna Teresa."

"And she loved him?"

"I suspect so."

"And has she seen him since their return to Madrid?"

"Never."

"Are you assured of that?"

"I would swear it on my breviary. But who comes here?" continued she, in astonishment, and looking towards the garden; "Donna Teresa Pacheco, as I live, and she is running. Something must have alarmed her; and a young hidalgo following her. *Madre de Dios*," continued she, clasping her hands as Clifford approached, and his features

could be distinguished. "It is he, though he has changed his dress. It is the contrabandista. Begone, Father Benedict, I would not for a golden rosary that you were found here."

Di Castro, more self-possessed than his companion, had eagerly watched the new comer, and studied with an accurate eye his person. He then, in obedience to the wishes of the duenna, left the room. He had reached the end of the corridor, when his further progress was intercepted by the entrance into the great hall of Donna Teresa.

For an instant the young lady lingered there; but on the appearance of Clifford, she again, as may be recollected, fled, and took refuge in the banqueting-room, followed as before by her pertinacious admirer.

"Ha!" said the quick-witted priest; "there is to be a private conference I see, but it will go hard, but I will be a witness to the *tête-à-tête*."

With the words he retraced his steps, and once more presented himself to the eyes of the terrified duenna.

"The key," said he; "quick—quick! The key of the gallery of the banqueting-room?"

"Why do you come back?" replied his agitated companion; "*Madre de Dios!* There is danger. There will be bloodshed. That fierce old man will murder you!"

"Nonsense, Donna Violante; danger there is none. But the key, I tell you. Give me immediately the key."

The duenna, with trembling hands, took it from a drawer; uttering, as she did so, a thousand incoherent questions as to the purpose for which it was required. They were not answered, for Di Castro wrung the key from her fingers; and telling her that he would at a future period inform her of the reasons of his conduct, hurried from the room.

Two minutes saw him safe at the gallery-door. He opened it cautiously, and having entered, relocked it on the inside, but in so noiseless a manner, that the young lovers below, deeply occupied as they were with each other, were unconscious of his approach,

and there the priest heard every word of the conversation. All was revealed to him—the identity of the contrabandista and Colonel Clifford; the scheme for the overthrow of Alberoni; the intense passion of the young envoy for his fair companion, and the belief that the fair lady, notwithstanding her affected coldness, returned his affection.

"I am like to make a good day's work of it," said he to himself. "This is precisely the link that the Cardinal wanted; but I must take care that Julio does not hurt the lad. I have been in a difficulty from running after a petticoat myself, and for old recollection's sake, must bring him off if I can scot-free. The Cardinal owes me a boon for this day's service. *Cospetto!* I have a claim on his gratitude."

That claim was destined to be greater than he had anticipated. He had heard the approach of the nobles. He had seen Clifford take refuge behind the arras, and had witnessed the proceedings of the conspirators. They departed, but the good-natured priest still lingered.

"The young fellow is in the lion's den," said he to himself; "I will not move till he is free from it."

With what followed, the reader is already acquainted. The discovery of the young soldier in his hiding-place; the sitting in judgment of the two nobles; the black slaves; the axes; the cord; the pronouncement of the final doom of the prisoner, all were witnessed in turn with feelings in which terror and interest were strangely mingled. At length, when the Duke of Escalona had announced that Clifford was to be executed at sun-down, the kind-hearted Di Castro could delay no longer. He opened the door, closed it somewhat incautiously after him, and hastily locking it, hurried down the spiral staircase. He found himself in the garden. Two minutes more placed him beside the narrow portal in its wall. To draw the bolt and gain the street was the work of an instant, and he took his way towards the palace as fast as his limbs could carry him. On other occasions it had been his habit to wait respectfully till the usher on the outside

of Alberoni's apartment had announced him. But the present was no time for ceremony, and rushing past the astonished janitor, he opened the door himself, and entered the room.

The surprise of the Cardinal may well be imagined. The speed with which Di Castro had run, and the agitation of his feelings, had exhausted his strength, and he sunk on a chair beside his patron, breathless, motionless, his face pale as death, and feature and manner alike intimating terror and excitement.

"Are you mad, Di Castro?" said the minister. "Have you seen a ghost, or have you committed murder?"

"That's the word, Julio," said the priest, "there is a murder to be committed. He is to die at sun-down."

"Who is to die?"

"The man you spoke of two days ago—the English envoy."

"Well, Di Castro," said the minister, coldly; "that is not a matter in which I

need take much interest—I shall have one enemy the less."

"And will you allow the conspirators to put him to death?"

"The conspirators!" said Alberoni, in surprise. "What mean you?"

"Why, the Duke of Escalona, the Count of Saldagna, and the others, who, for the last two hours, have been planning your arrest at the palace of the Grand Chamberlain!"

"Ha!" said the Cardinal, starting to his feet. "This is a more important matter than the death of Stanhope's envoy. Quick —haste ye man. Tell me what you have heard."

"Not one word, Julio," said his companion, who had now recovered his self-possession. "Not one word unless you promise to save the boy."

"Are you mad, indeed, Di Castro?" replied the minister. "What interest can you have in the whelp? He came here, as you know well, to plot the ruin of me, your friend—your master."

"I care not, Julio, I honour the lad. He preferred death to telling a woman's secret, and I will save him; or, if not, you may go fish out intelligence of conspiracies yourself, for you will get none from me."

"Well, you surly, obstinate brute," said the Cardinal, laughing, "I will save the boy; so let us hear about the conspiracy, and at once."

"But you have no time to lose; he is to die at sun-down."

"The conspiracy," said Alberoni, coldly. "Benedict Di Castro, tell me of the conspiracy."

"Why, then, in two words, Julio. The Duke of Escalona and a dozen more, have entered into an engagement, with the aid of Father D'Aubenton, to have you arrested."

"That's bad," said Alberoni, in a cold tone; "but it is not treason. I must have something more; said they ought of touching the person of the king?"

"The Count of Lemos proposed to seize him, but it was negatived."

"The Count of Lemos proposed it, you say?"

"Yes."

"You are ready to make oath of that before the Council of Castile?"

"I am."

"Then I have safe ground to go upon, and can act. Where is your protégé?"

"In the banqueting-room of Escalona's palace. It is there the murder is to take place. If he be not rescued before the Ave Maria, he is a gone man!"

"Di Castro," said the Cardinal. "You will await my return here. I would hear further details." He passed, as he spoke, into an adjoining apartment, and lifting a heavy silver hand-bell from the table, rang it. The summons was instantly answered, and an usher entered.

"What regiment of guards is on duty to-day at the palace?"

"The Walloons, your Eminence."

"Tell Colonel Zerclas that I want him instantly! Do you hear, Sir, instantly!"

The usher bowed low and retired, and

immediately a bluff, square-faced, broad-shouldered, good-tempered, determined-looking man, with an undeniable German physiognomy, entered the room.

The Cardinal gave him some orders, and the old soldier hurriedly departed. In an instant after came from below the clatter of arms, and a voice, "Leading file, to the left, march." Scarcely were the words uttered, when the heavy tread of a body of men was heard to issue from the court-yard, but they moved at a rapid pace, and the echoes of their steps soon died away in the distance.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE HEADSMAN AND THE BLOCK.

We must return to our friend Clifford.

The clang of the closing door was heard alike by the two nobles and their prisoner, and all three involuntarily turned their eyes upwards; they then, unconsciously perhaps, looked the one at the other, as if in suspicion, for to the ear of each the note had told a different tale. To the captive it promised hope, to his gaolers it whispered of disappointed vengeance. But the temper of the Duke of Escalona was too fiery to allow him to be long silent.

"Ha!" said he, "have we had more spies upon us than one? Was this," continued

he, turning to Clifford, "a comrade of yours? and has he gone to denounce us."

Ere the young Envoy could reply, the duke hurried from the room, and hastened to the door of the gallery overhead. He found it locked, and on sending for the major domo was assured by that aged functionary that the key had never been out of his possession. Still more astonished, his master ordered him to open the mysterious portal. He was immediately obeyed, but there was nothing to reward his curiosity. The gallery was empty.

"Was it a deception of the Enemy," muttered he. "Yet Saldagna and that treacherous boy heard it like myself, for I saw them raise their eyes. No, it must have been some one, probably a confederate, on the espial. Be it so. The fellow has seen the commencement of the tragedy. It shall be my care that none but permitted eyes witness its close."

With the words, he once more descended to the hall.

"I fear escape," whispered he to his aged

kinsman. "We must make sure of our captive."

"You would not," replied the Count of Saldagna, in the same low tone, "you would not shed his blood now?"

"No," replied Escalona, "I have promised he shall live till sun-down, but as soon as the last tongue of the bell has tolled the Ave Maria, he dies."

In the meantime, the black slaves had been standing at the door, each with his axe upon his shoulder, as still and motionless as if they had been hewn out of marble. They now, at a sign from their master, advanced, and seizing upon the prisoner, placed him in one of the arm chairs, and bound him to the back of it with cords. They then resumed their statue-like attitude near the door.

"I should hold him to be safe now," whispered the duke to Saldagna, "and we might depart, for I have ever found the blacks faithful; but in a case such as this I will risk nothing. Ere an hour be passed, the sun will set. I will remain here till all is over."

The duke spoke hesitatingly, and his usually bold eye fell before the glance of his companion.

"You have another reason, Pacheco," said his friend; "you dare not face the girl."

"You are right, Silva. At present, probably, she thinks he has escaped; but if I saw her she might draw suspicion from my manner, and though I must and ought to deal harshly with her, there are moments in which I cannot depend upon myself, and her tears might make me swerve from the justice to which my duty compels me. No, it is best; in every way it is best. I will remain here. But I must not give way to these childish feelings. We must prepare."

Again the duke made a sign to the slaves, and, depositing their axes, they left the apartment; their master himself locking the door after them, and from his bent head and anxious eye, evidently watching eagerly for their return. It was not long delayed. In a few minutes a gentle tap was heard. They were re-admitted, and the door once more carefully barred. What they bore with them

was a low square block, covered with red cloth, and this they placed in the centre of the apartment. Clifford shivered when he looked at it, for its presence but too well explained its purpose.

In the meantime the minutes passed on. Nearly an hour had elapsed since the duke had pronounced the doom of his captive, and the early night of a November day already heralded its approach by the rapidly darkening shadows. At length the sun went down, and as its last rays faded away from the lofty windows of the great hall, the Duke of Escalona once more broke silence.

"Young man," said he, "the moments of your existence are running fast. Is life dear to you?"

"It is dear to all," was the answer, "and most of all to the young."

"Then may you still save it, if you will confess when, and where, and how, you won the love of Donna Teresa Pacheco."

"You insult me," replied the young soldier, "by repeating a question which

reflects upon the honour of one so pure. I tell you again I confess nothing."

"You are obstinate, then. May your blood be upon your own head. But, as I said before, I will not destroy body and soul. In another minute will sound the bell of the Ave Maria, and I will release you from your bonds that, ere you leave this world, you may prostrate yourself before your Maker."

The old noble loosed the cords as he spoke and his captive was once more free. At the same moment the great bell of St. Isidro tolled the hour of prayer. With the sound the captors and the captive sunk alike upon their knees, and for a while nothing could be heard, save the almost inarticulate mutterings of the worshippers. In a few moments the duke rose, and his example was followed by his companions. Once more he made a sign to one of the slaves, whispering to Sadagna as he did so,—

"We must have light for the work."

The black, it appeared, understood his master's meaning, for he drew a pouch from

the inside of the shawl which formed his girdle, produced a flint and steel, and struck a light. With this he illuminated eight large torches which rested in sconces projecting from the tapestry on either side of the room. Once more the master of the house made a signal, and it was, as before, obeyed. The blacks approached the prisoner, and began to strip him, preparatory to the last fatal scene. They removed his coat and vest, opened his shirt, and folded it carefully back from the shoulders, so that nothing might impede the edge of the axe. This done they bound his arms, and placing him between them, led him to the red covered block, and forced him down upon his knees by its side. One then took post behind him, while the other tucked up the loose sleeves of his caftan to the shoulders, and seizing his axe with both hands, awaited the signal of his master.

It was a scene worthy of a painter. The immense room, with its tapestry-covered walls—the dim light of the torches—the kneeling figure—the plumed and velvet-

draped nobles — the black slaves, in their crimson robes and turbans, looking even more ghastly from their white teeth, and the fierce glare of their African eye. To any one who could have gazed at it for a moment, it might have seemed that he was looking at a group of statues, so still were the five figures, so motionless, so silent.

Once more the duke addressed Clifford.

"I know not why it is, boy," said he, "but there is something in your bearing that tempts me to like you, even in spite of myself. You are young—you have many years before you. Will you not purchase life? Will you not confess when and where you won the love of Donna Teresa Pacheco?"

The pulse of the young soldier beat wildly —his heart throbbed—there was a choking feeling in his throat, and once more the colour came to his cheek, and brightness to his eye. It was but for an instant, however. In another moment his face had recovered its usual character of cold, calm composure, and in a low, but firm voice he said:—

"Senor, I have already answered, I confess nothing. I will but say this, that the time will come when you would rather have cut off your right hand than do what you are about to do this day."

"That risk be mine," said the old man haughtily; "and yet, heaven knows I would have saved you, but you will not; and what must be must be."

With these words, he made a sign to the slave who stood behind Clifford. The black had been too well trained to his trade of blood not to understand him, for he tied a handkerchief over the eyes of the prisoner, and forced his head down upon the block.

"And now, Hassam," said the duke, addressing himself to the negro with the axe, who stood opposite, "when I raise my finger, strike."

Again there was a pause. It might be that the old noble repented; for a minute he stood motionless, and the only sound that broke the stillness of the chamber was the short, hard beating of the prisoner's heart.

But the delay was not long-lived. Suddenly the brow of the duke lowered, his lips compressed themselves, and he was about to raise the fatal finger, when at that instant the rapid but measured step of a large body of men was heard in the outer hall, and at the same moment a violent blow was struck on the door of the chamber, accompanied with a cry of, "Open in the king's name."

Apparently the assailants were too eager for admission to await an answer, for almost with the words, half a dozen heavy axes were applied to the portal. It gave way before them, and a large body of armed men, in the uniform of the royal guard, rushed into the room.

"*Der Teufel!* I am just in time," said the leader, whose white moustache and square jolly countenance would have proclaimed his German parentage, even if his accent had not led to the detection of it. "Just in time, by all the Hogen Mogens. But a minute later, and the youngster would have been sped. Unbind that fellow there," continued he, addressing some of the men

who accompanied him, "and if these black sons of the devil resist, send them to their father at once."

The duke, on the first appearance of his unexpected visitors, had been speechless with astonishment. He had now, however, recovered himself, and turning to the officer in command, "What means, Baron Zerclas, this insolence? Know you that you will have to answer before the Council of Castile for having violently entered the house of a grandee of Spain?"

"If I must answer before the Council," replied the old soldier, in a laughing tone, "I suppose I must. But I believe that it will be your excellency who will first be submitted to its judgment."

"Upon what grounds?"

"As traitor to our sovereign lord, Philip V., King of Spain and the Indies."

"It is false."

"That is a matter you must argue with those who have the right to argue it with you. My duty is more simple, and I now perform it. I, Tellez Zerclas, Colonel of the Walloon

Guard, arrest you, Don John Pacheco, Knight of the Golden Fleece, Duke of Escalona, Marquis of Villenas and Moya, Count of Gormas and Quixena, and Lord of Belmont, for high treason."

"The charge is false," repeated the old noble, in his usual tone of haughty self-possession, "and such I will prove it to be, when the time comes. At present I have no other duty than to obey the orders of my sovereign. Whither go I?"

"To Segovia. The carriage is at the door, and my lieutenant will accompany you."

"I dreamed." said the old man haughtily, his grandee pride exhibiting itself, even amid his misfortunes, "that if the head of the house Pacheco were to be a prisoner, it would have been no dishonour for the captain of the Walloon guard himself to have been his goaler."

The Fleming laughed. "The slight, believe me, your excellency," said he, "if slight it be, is none of mine. I must obey orders, and I have at present other duties. Beckendorf do your office."

The officer addressed, advanced towards the duke, and bowing low, led the way to the door. A carriage with four mules was in attendance. The duke entered, and was followed by the lieutenant of the Walloon guard and a subaltern officer. Two more, with loaded carbines, took their place on the box. The word was given that all was ready, and in another minute, the unfortunate Grand Chamberlain was on his way to the ancient fortress, which for centuries had been the state-prison of Spain.

We must now return to Clifford. Great joy is, perhaps, more violent in its effects than great grief—at least it was so with the young soldier. He had listened with a deaf ear to the temptations held out by Don John Pacheco, and he had awaited calmly, but resolutely, the approach of the fatal axe. But the unexpected appearance of his deliverers, and the sudden change from hopelessness to hope, had produced so violent a revulsion of feeling, that a slight faintness came over him, and he swooned. The removal of the cords, however, from his arms,

and the bandage from his eyes, restored him to consciousness, and he heard, with something like astonishment, that the late arbiter of his life, by one of the sudden changes of fortune's wheel, was himself a prisoner. Of his own fate he could not doubt. He felt that the attention of the king's officers had been directed to himself, and that it was probable, as satisfactory explanations were impossible, that his character as British envoy would soon be suspected, even if it were not already known. It was worth while, however, making an effort for liberty, and it was, therefore, though with something like agitation that he addressed himself to the officer in command.

"I am indebted to you for my life, and of course my liberty, for I suppose that whatever be the crimes of the Duke of Escalona, I at least, who was about to suffer death at his hands, cannot be supposed to share them."

"True, young Sir, and well argued," said the old Fleming, with a laugh, "but there are other offences against the laws than those committed by the Grand Chamberlain."

"I understand you not."

"I must explain them. You are my prisoner."

"On what grounds?"

"They will tell you who are permitted."

"And do I too go to Segovia?"

"That is a matter which will be discussed hereafter. In the mean time I would counsel you to resume your dress; but this is no tiring chamber. Ho! major domo," shouted he to one of the terrified menials, who in sign of his office, wore a gold chain passed thrice round his neck. "Show us to the duke's bedroom. Hillo! there, gentlemen of the chamber—pages and lights."

In Spain, in the eighteenth century, the king's name was a talisman, and those who spoke in it were implicitly obeyed. Four pages, with wax lights, preceded by the senior domestic, led the way to the sleeping quarters of the Grand Chamberlain.

"Aye," said Zerclas, as he arranged his moustache before an immense Venetian mirror which decorated one end of the apartment, "this is a better tiring-room than the

other." "Now, senor caballero," continued he, turning to Clifford, "to your toilet."

Had the young officer been left to himself, it would have been speedily performed, for he was in no humour for foppery, but his conductor was apparently not so easily satisfied, for he insisted on his prisoner exhausting all the minutiæ of personal decoration. Hot and cold water—scented soaps—perfumes—essences were each applied in their turn by the obedient high-born valets of the head of the house of Pacheco. Once more Clifford was apparelled. His satin doublet, his velvet jacket, his ruff, received the most graceful set from the experienced hands that arranged his dress—the very curl of his moustache was not neglected. At length he was attired *point device*, and the whimsical old soldier, as he surveyed him carefully from head to foot, appeared satisfied.

"Now, sir prisoner," said he, "we are fit to show ourselves with respectability in any gaol in Spain. Come, follow me to your dungeon."

He led the way as he spoke to the outer

door. A carriage was awaiting them, and as soon as the Fleming and his captive had entered it, it moved off at a rapid pace. For half an hour it travelled with unabated speed through streets whose darkness prevented their being recognised by Clifford, and at length stopped suddenly at a small door opening into a gloomy looking building, apparently from the masses which here and there might be seen looming through the darkness, defended with towers. The carriage door was opened, and the old Fleming left it, and called to his companion to follow him. Clifford obeyed. His conductor rapped at the door, and immediately it moved back obedient on its hinges, and as if by magic, for no one appeared behind it. Again the old officer said, "Follow me," and, with Clifford at his heels, mounted a gloomy staircase, and passing through an apartment at the top equally ill lighted, stopped at a door at the end of it. The Fleming tapped gently, and on receiving an intimation from within, opened it, pushed Clifford forward, and without entering himself, reclosed the door.

The young soldier looked round him with astonishment. He found himself in a large and splendidly furnished apartment, hung with the richest velvets, covered with paintings, and brilliantly lighted. In the centre was a table, on which in plate of gold and silver were numerous dishes. There were but two chairs placed beside it, and one was already occupied by a man with a round pleasant face, in a cardinal's dress.

It was Alberoni.

As the young soldier entered, he rose and advanced towards him, and extending his hand with frank courtesy, said,

"Good evening, Colonel Clifford. You are late. The supper has been awaiting you these five minutes."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE MINISTER AND THE ENVOY.

THE young soldier took mechanically the hand that was offered him, though stupified as he was from the sudden change from darkness to a blaze of light, and still more by the startling vicissitudes which had marked the last half hour of his existence; his manner intimated distinctly enough the confusion of his thoughts. Alberoni's quick eye marked his embarrassment.

"Come, Colonel Clifford," said the Cardinal, laughing, "the supper cools, and I am enough of an epicure to know that half-cold meat is scarce worth the eating.

Come, I say, take your place," and the Cardinal re-seated himself and pointed to the vacant chair.

The young envoy had by this time recovered his self-possession. "May I ask," said he—

"Not a word, not a syllable," said the Cardinal, interrupting him with a laugh. "There is an old adage about the difference between Philip full and Philip fasting, and it is possible," continued he, with a smile, "that there are others beside the king of Macedon whose present temper may be improved by a meal. Come, let us see what they have given us," and he removed the covers from the dishes near him.

The table was profusely served with meats, evidently the work of a first-rate artist. The sight seemed to produce agreeable feelings in the master of the house, for his eyes, as they roved from dish to dish, resumed their ordinary joyous expression.

"Yes," said he, as he snuffed the perfumed air. "This is the real parterre, and this its best bouquet. Talk of the 'Encens des

fleurs' indeed! I should know as well as any one, what forms the beauty of a garden, considering that I began life in dressing its flower-beds; and I can safely aver, that the best part of it are its more substantial productions, and they are never half so exquisite as when on a supper-table. Will you taste the soup?" And he passed to Clifford a silver basin.

The young envoy accepted the dish offered, and was soon doing ample justice to its contents.

"Ah! you like it," said the Cardinal. You appreciate the skill of my artist."

Clifford expressed his admiration of his handiwork, and added, "that it was not every Spaniard could produce such a dish."

"Why, you do not," said Alberoni, as he put down his spoon in undisguised astonishment, "you do not really suppose that a Spaniard could dress a supper like this? Are you so little acquainted with the country which is said by the proverb to have 'five hundred masses and not one sauce.' No, no, my young friend, I would not treat my worst enemy so cruelly as to

condemn him to a real Spanish repast—a mere show, without the substance—a service of plate and starvation. Had you had the misfortune to sup with the Duke of Albuquerque to-night, you would have had gold and silver dishes enough for three viceroys of Mexico, and probably two eggs and a pigeon beneath their covers."

"And whence, may I ask, comes your artist."

"My *cordon bleu* is French—for you may recollect" he added, with a satirical laugh, "that my master, the King of Spain, is uncle and nearest relative to Louis XV., and I do my best to rivet the connexion. But, from patriotic feeling towards the country over which I rule, I have also in my establishment a Spanish *sous chef*, and you have here the handiwork of both. So which prefer you—France, or Spain?"

The question was asked with an insidious smile, and evidently covered a double meaning.

"I will adhere, your Eminence to the north of the Pyrenees," said Clifford, enter-

ing into the joke. "If I have a prejudice on earth, it is in favour of a *Vol au vent.*"

"Then, here," said the Cardinal, as he pushed a dish towards him, "is one that will do honour to my recommendation. See the dark brown walls of its crust! and that tender pullet inside—and those delicate buttons at top. As Demosthenes, when asked what were the three parts of eloquence, said, 'gesture, gesture, gesture,' so I, were I required to name the three special requisites for giving piquancy to food, should say, 'mushrooms, mushrooms, mushrooms,'—So to the *Vol au vent*, my friend, and show yourself a valiant trencherman. As for myself, I will, as in duty bound, for to-night at least, adhere to Castile. Let us see what Don Jacinto has got for me: a man who, let me tell you, boasts of being the lineal descendant of King Pelayo. But what says the carte—A *pinto*—Ha, hum! these meat omelets—pretty well. A *guisado de perdices*—stewed partridges, not amiss. *Sesos escabichados y fritos*—brains en marinade—excellent, excellent!" and the Amphitryon

devoted himself, heart and soul, to the good things before him. For some minutes not a word was uttered, and the only sound that broke upon the ear was the gentle clatter of knives and forks, as the host and his guest gave themselves up with emulous energy to their meal.

" But, come," continued the master of the house, after a while, " we are but supping by halves. '*Sine Baccho friget Ceres.*' The proverb is not exactly that which the Romans have handed down to us, but I hold the other as not altogether orthodox from the lips of a churchman. Taste me this Manzanilla. Nay, hold the flask well above the goblet, and you will see how its drops sparkle in the gold. *Vaya*—not bad, is it?"

And so the Cardinal rattled on.—His manner joyous as that of a man who had not a thought beyond the pleasures of the present hour: now seasoning his conversation with some quaint bit of epicurean connoisseurship, and now with some anecdote full of point and exquisitely told, of the distinguished men and women with whom

his varied fortunes had brought him into companionship.

At length the meal approached its close. The more solid viands were removed, and their place supplied with chocolate and coffee, sweet wines and fruit.

"Come," said the Cardinal, as he drew in his chair towards the brazier, and motioned to his guest to follow his example, "fill one of those Venetian glasses with liqueur; you will find on the table both Muscatel and Pajarete. They will flavour the mouth agreeably after that luscious compound, for, I must say, the cocoa from his Majesty's pet farm in the Phillipines, is somewhat of the richest. And, now," continued he, with a laugh, "perhaps you will inform me to what I am indebted for the pleasure of Colonel Clifford's company here to-night?"

"You give a foreign appellation to a Spanish gentleman," said the envoy, with a smile, "but, however little I may be entitled to bear it, the name, for conversation, will serve as well as another—yet in this you have the advantage of me. You have asked

me a question. May I ask one in my turn. May I enquire to whom it is that I am to address my reply?"

"I fear that for a diplomatist, you are rather dull," replied the prime minister. "I think my dress might have informed you of the name of the wearer."

"The Cardinal!" exclaimed Clifford.

"Even so—Julio Alberoni."

"And am I to consider myself as a guest or a prisoner?"

"As a guest for the present—for the future, the proverb says, 'we should not peer into it.'"

"Then prime ministers," said Clifford, with a smile, "err hugely against the precept —for if they do not succeed in enacting the part of seers, it is from no want of making the attempt."

"And you would imply, that young envoys being prime ministers in embryo, should adopt the same diplomatic rule."

"The deduction of your Eminence may be a correct one, but, pardon me for saying I do not see its application."

"*Cospetto!* It is simple enough. Are not you a young envoy?"

"I am the guest of the prime minister of Spain."

"And before he had the honour of your company, how is he to describe you?"

"As your Eminence has rescued me from my thraldom, I suppose I need scarcely inform you.

"As the captive of Don John Pacheco?"

Clifford bowed.

"And before the grim old grandee laid hands on you, were you the captive of any one else?"

Clifford coloured.

The Cardinal gave a malicious smile.

"Nay," continued he, "I might have been in error—but the house of Escalona seems fatal to you, and I thought your liberty might have been attempted by some other member of the family."

Again the envoy blushed.

"There is a crusty old fellow of a cousin of the duke's, one Don Manuel de Silva, Count of Saldagna. He would have been

an awkward enemy, for he is as hard-hearted as a flint, and had he seen some old ruffian ready to cut your throat, he would not have moved a finger to save you. Was he your foe?"

Clifford shook his head.

"It was not his feud then that was taken up by the Grand Chamberlain? Well, I am fairly at my wit's end, for the duke has but one other relative, his grand daughter, Donna Teresa. But you could not have offended her."

Clifford coloured crimson from temple to chin.

"Aha! I begin to suspect," said the Cardinal, "Cupid, king of gods and men, has been mixing in the plot. My honoured guest has been wooing the rosebud of the house of Pacheco."

Once more Clifford was embarrassed, but he instantly recovered his self-possession.

"Your Eminence is in error," said he, in a tone of affected gaiety. "Donna Teresa is the heiress of one of the first houses in Spain, and to poor hidalgos, like myself,

the hearts of such are forbidden commodities."

"Pshaw!" continued the Cardinal. "There are men to whom the difficulty of success, would but add zest to the attempt. Our Custom-laws are, God knows, stringent enough, and yet I have heard of a dashing young fellow of a contrabandista, who in spite of king and cardinal, contrived to set all regulatious at defiance, and smuggle himself into possession of silks and laces"—and he paused for an instant, and then added, in a meaning tone—"and ladies' hearts."

Once more the young envoy blushed deeply.

"Even if it were so, your Eminence," replied he, at length, "such a man is little to be envied. The goods which the contrabandista carries may be valuable enough, but he possesses them only for the moment: for permanent happiness, permanent enjoyment, is necessary."

"And why," said the Cardinal, "should he not hope for this? We have in Spain, bold fellows amongst our contrabandistas. I

have known them make brave soldiers, and when a man has served his country well, he is entitled to the fairest reward that country can bestow—even if it were a grandee's daughter."

Clifford saw the allusion, but he affected not to understand it, and in a cold tone, he said—

"The Spaniards are fortunate in so generous a sovereign."

"And so discriminating a prime minister you should have added," said the Cardinal, laughing—"*per Baccho*, young sir, you would make but a poor diplomatist."

"He only makes a good one, who has a heaven-born genius for the office," and the young soldier bowed profoundly.

"*Vaya*," said Alberoni, with a loud laugh, "that was not amiss. You are positively improving. *In time*," continued he, resting strong emphasis on the words, "I have an idea I could make a great man of you."

Again Clifford bowed.

"Any Spaniard," said he, "would be

fortunate in the patronage of your Eminence."

"Then, my young friend, it is a fortune they are not likely to possess."

Clifford looked surprised.

"What causes your astonishment," said his host. "for success we need action—action—action. It is sufficient that in the palace, there should be the head to plan; what we want beyond it are the hands to execute. And you would seek them in vain in the Peninsula. You will find a dozen Machiavels in any street in Madrid, and more politicians at the Puerta del Sol, than in all the capitals of Europe. Each has an infallible specific for securing grandeur to the monarchy, and each will overwhelm you with advice; but ask them for action, ask them to stir, move, or exert themselves, and they look at you with astonishment, light a fresh cigarito, wrap themselves in their cloaks, and once more resume their eternal babble. Solomon says 'that in the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom,'—he should have lengthened the proverb, and

added, that there is not consequently success."

Clifford smiled.

"If your Eminence is to be believed," said he, "you are to be pitied. It is clear that the post of prime minister is a painful office. Why not resign it?"

"Ha! and so save Colonel Clifford the trouble of taking it out of my hands."

The young envoy bent forward in his chair, and was apparently employed heart and soul in arranging the strings at the knees of his small-clothes.

"Your Eminence," replied he as he recovered himself, "quoted the Proverbs of Holy Writ. You now adopt its language. You speak in parables."

"Then let us have done with them," said the Cardinal. "You are come hither to overturn my government. It is a bold act in one so young, more especially (you recollect your look of doubt when you entered this room to-night) when you did not even know your enemy."

"It might happen that in parties opposed

to each other, such ignorance might be mutual."

"The arrow is well shot, but in the present case, at least, it has not hit its mark."

Clifford smiled.

"You doubt," said the Cardinal, laughing. "It is not the fashion of the church to reason with infidelity; but for once it shall depart from its rules, and I will condescend to convince you. Here is your description. I received it this morning."

As he spoke he drew from the pocket in the interior of his dress a paper, and read as follows:—

"Charles Clifford, son of Lord Clifford, and of Blanche de Zuniga. Colonel of the Life Guards of His Britannic Majesty; Height five feet eleven; nose straight; hair auburn; eyes blue; is very handsome; speaks with equal fluency the Castilian and French languages; is bold, self-possessed, and shrewd. Is sent by Dubois and Lord Stanhope to overturn the government of the Cardinal, and has letters of credence to the

Queen, D'Aubenton, and the Marquis Scotti. He is supported also by the influence of the Princess of Ursins, who saw him in Paris."

"Your Eminence is in error," said the young soldier, interrupting him hastily, "I pledge you my honour I never saw the Princess of Ursins in my life."

"Colonel Clifford is correct, and yet so is my report. It simply says that the Princess of Ursins had seen him."

Clifford looked at the Cardinal in dismay.

"Well, my young friend," said he, "what say you to my information. Your astonishment still masters you. When you have arranged your thoughts, will you favour me with the result of your reflections?"

There was a pause for some time. At length Clifford's brow cleared.

"Ha!" said the Cardinal, "I see by your eye that you have at length a distinct idea in your head, will you favour me with it?"

"I have come to the conclusion," said his young companion, "that—," and he hesitated.

"That what—" continued Alberoni eagerly.

"That your Eminence has given me a good supper to enable my nerves to support the communication, and that now—I may prepare for Segovia."

"Not yet," said the Cardinal with emphasis. "Your going there will depend upon yourself. Now listen to me. You are a young man entering into life; and for the purpose of advancing yourself, you have engaged in a desperate enterprise—that of overturning my government. The task is an impossible one, for no task can be accomplished without means. Yours depend upon your letters of credence to three persons—all three attached friends of my own."

Clifford smiled.

"You doubt me. I would prove it. The queen, like myself, is a Parmesan. She owes to me her throne. She is bound to me still more firmly by her present and future interest; for, like myself, she hates the Spaniards, and is hated by them, and she could only keep her place against the faction of the grandees by the aid of me her countryman. As for Scotti, the minister of

Parma, he in himself is a mere cipher, a fat, bloated, eating, drinking, sensualist, tolerated for his insignificance, and, in fact, selected for it. He dare do nothing against the interest of his master, the Duke of Parma; and he in his turn owes his political existence, and that of his duchy, entirely to the aid lent him by Spain against the house of Austria. Two then of your three patrons, as you see, are—aye, and must be—my fast friends. As for the third—"

Again Clifford smiled—the quick eye of the Cardinal remarked it.

"You doubt," continued he, "the affection of the Jesuit."

"Your Eminence, I said nothing."

"Yes, you did—your smile spoke volumes. You doubted, I repeat, the affection of the Jesuit, and you did so because some two hours ago that blundering fool, the Grand Chamberlain, announced to the noble plotters in his banqueting-room, that, in return for the priest's elevation to the purple, he had the assurance of his support. D'Aubenton *is* to obtain his Cardinal's hat, but it will be

from the hands of Julio Alberoni; and the government, therefore, of Julio Alberoni, will merit the approbation, and receive the support, of the confessor of his Catholic majesty Philip V."

The Cardinal paused, as if in expectation of a reply, but none was made. The young envoy was so thoroughly stupified, that he knew not either what to say or to do. The Cardinal continued—

"You see, then, the accomplishment of your mission is hopeless. It is the duty of a brave man to persevere in his object, though he may meet with difficulties; a fool only will continue the struggle when success is impossible. But I speak to deaf ears. You make no reply."

"And what reply does your Excellency expect? The axioms that you promulgate are incontestable. I do not dispute them."

"You agree, then, in their truth; it is well: but the best axioms are valueless unless we apply them."

"And therein I fail. I see not your Eminence's drift."

"Yet it is simple. You have undertaken an impossible task. Abandon it."

Clifford looked grave.

"Do more. You find my power firmly established. Take the aid of the colossus you cannot overthrow. Be my friend."

The envoy shook his head.

"Nay—hear—before you decide. You are young, bold, shrewd. It is of such stuff they make great men. It is these qualities that have converted the gardener's boy of Parma into a prime minister, and the same qualities may make of Charles Clifford his right hand and his successor. And Spain is the field for their exercise. In England they will avail you nothing. There the patronage of office is limited to a few great families, and all the talents under heaven will not aid your rise, unless the head of your name can furnish Walpole with valuable political support. Here, on the contrary, is an adequate opening for your abilities."

"I am a stranger in the land."

"And, therefore, you are valuable. I, too,

am a stranger, and can exist only by the support of those who, like myself, have no sympathy with the obsolete prejudices, and no connexion with the intrigues which distinguish the present miserable descendants of a once great people. It is in men like you that I seek my strength, and you will remain here, not as my enemy, but as my friend."

"It is impossible," said Clifford, calmly.

"It is not only possible, but it must be," continued the Cardinal, speaking with all the enthusiasm of his Italian nature. "What attaches you to England?"

"It is my country."

"To the brave man every spot on earth is a country, and there is not one on which the sun shines more brightly than on this. But I speak not of its climate. There are weightier advantages. Hear what I can bestow. At home what are your prospects? The limited means of your family (you see I know everything) descend to your elder brother, and you may pass life unhonoured and unknown; fortunate if you be permitted

to retain with it the beggarly command of a regiment. In Spain, on the contrary, see what a career—rank, wealth, honours; for if I am well served, it is not only my wish to be liberal; it is my interest. See what I have done for Ripperda. But a few years back he came here from the Low Countries, a penniless Dutch baron, a mere adventurer. But the fellow was bold, clever, and faithful. Behold him now. I have bestowed on him riches, position—nay, more, I gave him what some would prize more dearly, a young bride: the heiress of a great fortune, and a noble name. Is there no fair girl in Spain," and the Cardinal's voice sank to a whisper, "whose hand could win Charles Clifford to make it his country and his home?"

"None," said Clifford, with calm dignity, "if it is to be purchased with dishonour. I am, as your Eminence apparently well knows, the cadet of a poor family, and with no other inheritance but my sword; but so long as its brightness is untarnished, I am content with my lot, and I will not purchase rank or for-

tune even at the expense—" and the young soldier stopped and coloured—

"Of the hand of Donna Teresa Pacheco."

"Your Eminence is right," said the young man, as his face became deadly pale, and he clasped convulsively with both hands the arms of his chair, "not even at the price of the hand of Donna Teresa Pacheco!"

"It is madness, boy," said the Cardinal, "utter madness. But you have seen but one side of the picture. Have you courage to look at the other?"

"Paint it. Is it death?"

"No! worse! Imprisonment for life. The fair hours of youth—the brightest period of existence—consumed within four stone walls, without the power of looking upon the outer world—secluded from its joys—its sunshine—its activity. For to a bold, energetic temperament like yours, what death is so dreadful, as perpetual and enforced repose. —that hourly torture by which the energies of mind and body feed upon themselves, for lack of the natural obstacles to fame, and

fortune, and success, which heaven intended them to grapple with and overcome."

The young man groaned and buried his face in his hands.

Alberoni had mixed the potion skilfully, and he left it to do its work. Clifford raised his face at length. It was deadly pale, and there was a tear in either eye; but its expression was calm, and the Cardinal knew at a glance that he had failed.

"No, your Eminence," said the young soldier, as he rose to his feet and stood firmly but respectfully before his host, "you tempt me not."

"And you will not accept my favours."

"You can bestow upon me but one, for which I will be grateful, and that is, that you never renew the present subject again. I had my mission, and it has failed. I am the prisoner of your Eminence, and await your orders and my future destination."

The Cardinal from under his heavy brows looked long and stedfastly at the young man, but the calm eye and firm mouth told him

that he had no hope. He rose and bowed coldly and haughtily.

"Colonel Clifford," said he, "I had hoped this interview would have terminated differently, but you have chosen your lot, and must abide by it. I have the honour to bid you farewell."

He left the room as he spoke. In a few minutes an officer informed Clifford that his presence was required below. The young envoy descended the staircase. A carriage was in waiting; he entered it, and the officer took his place by his side. The door was then closed; the four mules started off at a gallop, and the unfortunate representative of Lord Stanhope was on his way to Segovia.

## CHAPTER IX.

### DOUBTS AND FEARS.

We must now return to the fair granddaughter of the Duke of Escalona. It can well be imagined how intense was the terror with which she had witnessed the entrance of her grandfather and his guests. Would Clifford be discovered? If he were discovered what would be his fate? Such were some of the questions she asked of her own heart, and as the answers suggested themselves, she shivered, for she was too well acquainted with the habits of her countrymen, and their reckless disregard of bloodshed, to doubt the result.

On leaving the banqueting-room, instead of joining the duenna, she betook herself to her bedchamber, which looked upon the street, and there watched with eager eyes the departure of the unwelcome visitors. At length she saw them, one by one, leave the house, and as soon as she believed that the hall below was deserted, she stole down stairs for the purpose of ascertaining if her lover, too, had disappeared.

She found the door of the banqueting-room locked. The discovery had already taken place, and the Duke of Escalona, to prevent the escape of his prisoner, had drawn the bolt. Too terrified to ask any questions, and yet with a presentiment of evil, the young girl hurried back to her chamber; and her retreat was the more rapid, as she heard steps in the corridor, and fancied that the tread of the foot resembled that of her grandfather. Another half-hour passed in agonizing suspense, and once more she would have left the chamber with the intention of confessing the whole truth to the Duke of Escalona, but alas! she no longer possessed

the power. The door was fastened on the outside. It had been the act of the Grand Chamberlain himself. On going forth to seek the black slaves, he had remarked the girl enter her apartment, and—determined on his vengeance, and yet fearful lest the entreaties of his child might move him to clemency—he had resolved upon guarding against any such contingency, by making her a prisoner till the catastrophe was over.

This new mystery added to the poor girl's terrors. Sick at heart and half fainting, she flung herself upon a sofa, and scarce knowing what to hope or what to fear, buried her face in her hands.

From this stupor she was recalled by a shriek; and the well-known voice of Donna Violante was heard in the corridor, demanding the instant presence of her charge.

"*Anima mia*," cried the old woman, as she struggled nervously with the lock. "For heaven's sake, open the door?"

"I cannot; it is fastened on the outside. But what has happened? For the love of the Virgin, tell me, and at once."

"The duke—the duke," screamed the Duenna, but beyond this the usually voluble Italian was unable to articulate a word, for she was intensely agitated herself; the more so, as she could not help suspecting that Benedict Di Castro's presence in the gallery had something to do with the catastrophe. At length it seemed to have occurred to her that it would be safer for her own interests to leave the explanation to others; and with a view of having them made as rapidly as possible, she summoned the aid of the servants, and by their assistance the door was forced and the prisoner released. No sooner was she free than Donna Teresa hurried to the hall below, and there, for the first time, she was informed of the full extent of the calamity which had overtaken her house.

"And who, Father Jerome," said she, addressing an old ecclesiastic, who had grown grey in the family, and was her grandfather's spiritual director and her own, "who are arrested by the king's officers?"

"The Grand Chamberlain, my daughter, and your kinsman the Count of Saldagna."

"But there were many here;" and the conscious girl stopped and coloured deeply, and then, in a faltering tone, she added, "Were there none else taken?"

"Yes, yes, my daughter," said the old man, garrulous with age. "It is a matter scarcely worth mentioning, in the presence of such a misfortune as that which has overtaken your worthy grandfather; but there was also seized a young man — a hidalgo apparently."

The girl clasped her hands with an exclamation of thankfulness, and then added, hurriedly, "And what, Father Jerome, became of him?"

"It matters little what became of him. The thing that puzzles me most is, that no one can even guess who he was."

"But he was taken, you say?"

"Yes; and in the banqueting-room, along with the Grand Chamberlain and Don Manuel; and it is thought he must have committed some great offence, for they had stripped him, and Hassan and Muley had been summoned; and you know the blacks

are never in attendance, save when the Grand Chamberlain is about to use the cord or the axe."

The poor girl staggered against the wall, and for a minute was speechless with agitation.

"But he is safe?" muttered she, faintly, at length.

"Yes, yes, the Grand Chamberlain is safe; that is, as safe as any one can be said to be in the hands of the king's gendarmerie. He must by this time be half way to Segovia."

"But the young man, Father Jerome?"

"Nay, I know not what became of him," said the worthy priest, in a tone of indifference, that contrasted strangely with the feelings of his companion. The reply seemed ominous, and the young girl, once more, lent for support against the wall.

"But they did no harm to the prisoner?" muttered she at length.

"Harm, indeed!" replied the worthy ecclesiastic, in an indignant tone. They dare not. The duke is a grandee of the first class, and nothing but the Council of Castile

has a right to lay sword on one of his rank."

"But the young man, Father Jerome," said Therese, crimsoning to the temples, "did they him any injury?"

"Oh, the hidalgo! I had forgotten him. Injury did you say? No, indeed! and that is the most puzzling part of the matter. That godless Flemish boor, with manners only fit for a pot-house, Baron Zerclas, the captain of the Walloon Guard, why he pays the young fellow as much respect as if he were an Infante of Spain. 'Ho! the major-domo of the duke,' shouts he, on one side. 'Ho! his excellency's gentlemen of the chamber,' halloos he on the other. 'What! no attendance for the king's lieutenant? Parade me, instantly, four pages with wax-lights.' With that, he marches my young gentleman to his excellency's own tiring-room, has him dressed as carefully as if he were preparing him for the Chamber of Mirrors on an audience of the queen; and then——"

"And then — holy father;—but never

mind his dress—what did he do with him?"

"Ah, that, my daughter," said the old priest, shaking his head mysteriously, "is what no one can even guess."

"Perhaps," said Therese, timidly, "they took him also to Segovia?"

"Him to Segovia!" said the worthy priest, in unutterable astonishment; "a lad—a nobody—a Don Fulano! My dear child, you forget yourself strangely. A lodging in the castle of Segovia is an honour reserved only for grandees. The state prison would be degraded for ever if it were forced to receive within its walls a mere hidalgo."

The young girl asked no more questions, and returned to her chamber, there to meditate upon the past and future.

Her first thoughts were of Clifford. The young soldier had fixed himself firmly in her heart. His graceful person, his high bearing, his gallantry at the Somo Sierra, all contributed to give him a place in her affection; but what perhaps had not been the least influential in producing this result was

that she looked upon herself as in some degree the cause of his present misfortunes. There were, no doubt, other reasons for the sudden liking. They will be detailed hereafter; but it is hoped that those already stated will suffice for poor Therese's excuse. She loved—and it was therefore with the most absorbing interest that she had listened to the details of the old ecclesiastic.

The information which she had elicited was on the whole favourable. Her lover's life was, at least for the moment, safe. It was true that his present fortunes and future fate were involved in mystery, but still he was in the hands of the king's officers, and the attention paid him (great enough as it had been to excite the astonishment of Father Jerome), was proof at least of no very violent enmity. Even if, as Donna Teresa feared, his diplomatic character had been discovered, it was little probable that Alberoni would venture to offer injury to the representative of a powerful kingdom. A mere imprisonment, however tedious might be its hours to her lover, did not produce in

the fair visionary any special feelings of anxiety.

Clifford's future fortunes being thus satisfactorily disposed of, the young lady turned her thoughts to her grandfather. Her first act, as the idea of the old man rose before her mind's eye, was to blush deeply that he had not been sooner the object of her interest. His fate and probable future were more puzzling. What the crime of the duke was, she did not know, but she knew enough to alarm her. She had long been in the secret of her grandfather's hatred to the Cardinal, and she suspected that the large body of nobles whom she had that day seen in the banqueting-room, had not been summoned there without a definite object. With the appearance of many of them she was unacquainted, but those whom she did know were, she was well aware, distinguished for their animosity to the prime minister.

These suspicions received of course additional strength from the result. To arrest a grandee of the first class was a matter which even the sovereign dared scarcely venture

on. The boldness of the step satisfied her, that it would not have been taken unless Alberoni had evidence in his hands sufficient to support him against the odium, which would be the natural result of the imprisonment of a noble so distinguished as the grand chamberlain.

The affair, however, was over; it was useless to speculate on its causes. All that human wisdom could do was to repair the evil,—if to repair it were possible. But to do so efficiently, it was necessary to be acquainted with the facts of the case, and these could only be obtained from her grandfather himself. To him, therefore, the young heiress determined to repair.

The idea was carried out without delay. On the following morning two carriages were at the door of the palace of Escalona,—the leading mules of each rejoicing in those silk traces, six yards long, which formed one of the most highly-prized privileges of the grandees; the possession of which was the object of many a jealous aspiration on the part of the wives of the Jew bankers and the rich

citizens. Each vehicle was in shape somewhat like the penny toys, which the older of the present generation may recollect seeing in their childhood, and which were formed on the model of the coach of these times. The bottom was very narrow, the top very broad, and projecting a good half foot beyond the four sides, each the exact counterpart of the other in its shape and flat formal outline. The vehicles had a coach-box in front, similar to that used now-a-days for supporting a hammer-cloth, but without its drapery. It was only, however, used for show, as since the days of the Count-Duke it had never been occupied. Olivarez had imparted to a friend by his side a great political secret, which had been overheard and revealed by the coachman. The indiscreet Jehu had in consequence been dismounted from his box and converted into a postilion. Fashions follow prime ministers, when prime ministers are more powerful than kings; and the grandees having no secrets to communicate, conducted themselves, as if each word that fell from their lips was that of a secretary

of state. In a week there was not a nobleman with a coachman in all Madrid. The citizens, with two mules to their carriage, acted with the same energy as those who possessed four,—and postilions became the law of Spain.

In the first of the two vehicles went Donna Teresa and Father Jerome. Into the capacious interior of the second were crowded her two waiting-maids, two gentlemen ushers, and four pages. The duenna was left behind. Words had dropped at intervals from the conscience-stricken and somewhat hysterical Donna Violante, which suggested to her ward, a doubt alike of the Neapolitan's fidelity, and of her ignorance of the true cause of the calamity which had overtaken the house of Escalona. By nightfall the journey had been safely performed, and the girl was in the arms of her grandfather.

The old man welcomed her with overflowing affection. It might be that for the moment he had forgotten the stranger in the banqueting-room. It might be that solitude and misfortune had softened his heart. What-

ever was the cause, her reception was to the last degree kind. In the course of the long evening, the duke detailed to his fair descendant what had taken place at the meeting of the nobles. It was only towards the close of his narrative, and when Donna Teresa had asked him if he could guess by whom he had been betrayed, that the Grand Chamberlain exhibited irritation, for the vision of his unbidden visitor rose to his memory. But uncertain in what light to view him, whether as the revealer of the plot, or the lover of his grandchild, he drew himself up coldly, and said nothing in reply.

For an instant his young relative seemed to share his embarrassment, for she, too, coloured deeply, and then became deadly pale. Immediately after, however, her brow cleared, and as if she had adopted some sudden resolution, in a hurried voice, she said—

"You do not answer my question, my dear grandfather? You conceal something from me?"

The old man was still silent.

"You found some one behind the ta-

pestry," said Therese, in a slightly agitated tone. "You suspect him of having betrayed your plans. You are deceived. He was no traitor!"

The duke smiled bitterly.

"You doubt me," continued Therese; "I would warrant his honour with my life."

"And who," said the old noble coldly, "is the cavalier for whom Donna Teresa Pacheco thus pledges herself?"

"Colonel Clifford, the English envoy."

"A young man of whom you know nothing."

"One, on the contrary, of whom I know much; to whom I owe everything; who rescued me from ruffians, who saved my life, and more than my life, at the Somo Sierra!"

"To render such service to a daughter of the house of Pacheco is honour enough for a low-born vassal.

"He is none such. His family is as noble as our own."

"Pshaw, girl," said the old grandee, pettishly. "There is no blue blood out of Spain. A stranger has imposed on you."

"He has not deceived me. Yet, if only Castilian descent can give nobility, he has it, and from the same source as ourselves."

The duke looked in astonishment. "You speak unintelligibly, my child," said he.

"Then I will explain. His mother was a Zuniga—Blanche de Zuniga, the sister of the Duke of Bejar, and the stranger, as you call him, is your cousin and mine!"

Her grandfather threw himself back in his chair, and looked at her in astonishment. There was a long pause.

"And this," said he, at length, speaking in a low tone, and as if to himself; "This was the reason—this instinct of blood that moved me towards the lad, even when I thought that I had the best causes for anger. And now I can understand what he meant, when he said, that I should wish that I had cut off my right hand rather than have done what I was about to do yesterday. Yet, why did he not tell me all this?"

"It was impossible. His instructions tied him down to communicate with only three persons."

"And he preferred to die rather than disobey his orders. It was well done, and worthy of the blood of Zuniga; but why did you not inform me that the boy was of the same race as my sainted mother?"

"You would not permit me. You may recollect when I communicated to you, on the day of my return, the refusal of the Princess of Ursins to re-enter Spain, and stated that she had sent in her place a young Englishman, as her representative, to assist in the downfall of Alberoni, you refused at once to listen to the subject."

"And upon good grounds," said the old man. "I held that the removal of the Cardinal, if effected by Spaniards, was but the exercise of a just right; if I had admitted the representative of two foreign, and lately hostile, nations to enter into the plot, it assumed at once the character of treason."

"I do not impeach your reasons, my dear grandfather; I simply show you why I was silent."

"Well, I dispute not, that at the time, you had sufficient ground for not returning to

the subject, but yesterday, when you anticipated his discovery," and the old man hesitated for a moment, "and must have probably guessed at the result, why did you not inform me of the whole truth?"

"I should have done so, but I had no longer the power. My door was locked."

"Ah!" said the conscience-stricken grandee. "Oh blessed Virgin!" continued he, as he clasped his hands and bent his head devoutly, "from how much misery hast thou saved me! And where," said he, after a while, "is the young man now?"

"That," replied Donna Teresa, "I cannot tell, and from what I have heard I cannot even guess;" and she then detailed the mysterious communication which she had received from Father Jerome.

"Doubtless, another plot of the Parmesan," said the duke, with a smile; "but I shall probably soon learn. You are aware," continued he, "that Don Juan Sanchez, the governor of the castle, is an old friend of ours. He was the captain of my guard when I was viceroy at Naples, and for the sake of

times gone by, does not pull too tight the reins of discipline. More especially," he added, with a smile, "as he possibly suspects that the sun may one day be on my side of the wall. Let us see what he says to it."

He summoned a servant as he spoke, and through him requested the presence of the alcayde; and in obedience to the requisition, that official entered the room.

"Well, Don Juan," said the duke, pointing to his granddaughter, "here is another acquaintance of yours. She has somewhat grown since you saw her playing with her doll in the Chiaja; but I would ask a favour of you?"

"If it is not against the rules," said the governor, with a smile, "I need hardly say what pleasure I shall have in according it."

"Nay, there is no treason in it, Sanchez," said the Grand Chamberlain; "what I would learn is this. There was a young man arrested yesterday in my house at the same time with Saldagna and myself. Can you tell me what has become of him?"

"Is it," replied Don Juan, "a young Eng-

lishman, who, they whisper, was sent by Dubois to trip up the heels of his Eminence?"

"The very man," said the duke.

"Then I am able to give your excellency the latest intelligence. He arrived here at four o'clock this morning."

"A prisoner?"

"Alas, my Lord," said the alcayde, laughing, "I fear I have but few voluntary guests. He is quartered in the room over head; and if,—for I have no orders to the contrary,—it would be any pleasure to the Grand Chamberlain, I shall be happy to introduce him here."

Therese coloured deeply. The duke saw his granddaughter's embarrassment, and hastened to relieve it.

"Not at present, Sanchez," said he, hastily; "not at present. Our calamity is too recent, and too great, to admit, as yet, of visitors."

Juan Sanchez withdrew. A long conversation then took place between the duke and his grandchild. The result of it was, that the young heiress should return to Madrid,

and seek for her grandfather an audience of the king.

"I must see him," said the old man. "Philip is just. His too easy temper may occasionally lead him into error, but if he could learn that our plot was directed, not against himself, but against his minister, he would not leave an old and faithful servant to rot in a dungeon."

In accordance with this, on the following morning at an early hour Donna Teresa retraced her steps to the capital, with the view of devising some means, for introducing the head of the house of Pacheco to the presence of the man, who, in common parlance, was the Monarch of Spain; but who might have been more justly described as the prisoner of the palace of Madrid.

## CHAPTER X.

### LA ROCHE.

AMONG the celebrities of the Spanish court at the time of which we write, there are few better known in the pages of St. Simon than La Roche, the premier valet de chambre, or, as we would express it at the present day, first gentleman of the bed-chamber to Philip V.

Kings are human beings. They have, perhaps, even in a greater degree than their fellows (for they are less compelled to restrain them), the passions and the weaknesses of humanity. Of these, be it a passion or a weakness, there are few feelings in the

human heart, more universal than a desire for sympathy. What so delightful as to find one who joys in our joy, and sorrows in our sorrow; whose hopes, and wishes, and fears, are but a reflection of our own; and what more natural than to seek such a person in a dependant? Our superiors and our equals may be our friends, and attached ones; but their sympathies must be limited; for they too have hopes and fears personal to themselves, which naturally and necessarily occupy their attention; and in the proportion in which it is so occupied, diminish the thought of mind and energy of body, which can be devoted to interests external of them.

With dependants it is, or at least was, different. Their position in the early part of the eighteenth century—when the upper and lower grades of society were less equalized than at present—took its entire colouring from that of their master. His fortune was their fortune; his rise their success; his fall their ruin.

The feudal system did much to strengthen this state of things, for it divided a king-

dom into ten thousand little sovereignties, the members of which reserved their affections for their own clan and locality; and looked upon all and everything beyond them as strangers and alien to themselves. The feeling that animated the subordinates, was shared with equal intensity by their chief. Without the limits of his domain, affection was doubtful; while envy, hatred, malice, and even open and decided hostility, might be considered probable, if not certain. His interest, therefore, forced him to look for friends at home. There only he found sympathy, but there also he found only dependants; and thus the bosom counsellor of the great lord was, with scarce an exception, an inferior.

The necessity of the feudal noble was still more that of the sovereign. His powers and wishes were thwarted both from without, and from within; by his brother monarchs, but not less so by his great vassals and great churchmen. He was forced thus to limit still further, the circle from which was to be selected his ally of the heart, and to confine

the choice not merely to members of his own family, but to those of his domestics, whose low rank excited no jealousy in the higher classes; and whose office, by giving the right and the facility of constant approach, made communication easy.

Such were the reasons, too little understood, which gave to the Court Fools, Triboulet and Chicot, the friendship of two powerful kings, Francis I. and Henry III.; and such also was the cause of the influence exercised by his attendant over Philip V.

Yet La Roche had an advantage possessed by few of those favoured with the personal friendship of royalty. He was well born. The cadet of a noble family,—which in its junior branches had fallen into extreme poverty,—he had been selected by Louis XIV. about a year prior to the accession of his grandson to the Spanish throne, as first gentleman of the bed-chamber to the future sovereign. The choice had been made on the recommendation of the Prince de Chalais, with some members of whose family La Roche was distantly connected. The prince

had spoken in the highest terms to the old king of the valuable qualities of his protegé, and the premier valet had in the sequel fully justified the recommendation.

At the period of attaining his unexpected royalty Philip was but seventeen; his attendant ten years older. The latter had been well educated—was, like all the scions of the nobility in France, intimate with the public and private history of her great families—was thoroughly versed in the gossip of the *Oeil de bœuf*, and acquainted with the appearance, at least, of every one of either sex that was distinguished at the court of France. Such stores of knowledge, and of the sort most valued by the young, aided by a talent for narrating of the very first order, soon gave him great influence over Philip.

La Roche did not abuse it. He had no ambition. He cared nothing for honours or money; had no passion for mixing himself up with political affairs, and had virtue, or it might be indifference enough, to refuse the numerous bribes, which on his first arrival in Spain, were offered him by dignitaries of

church and state, as the price of his recommending them to his master.

These temptations, and the resistance to them, from time to time came to Philip's ear, and they naturally strengthened his attachment to his attendant; an attachment which upon other grounds was already great. Shy, timid, retiring, the young monarch hated new faces, or the appearance of any before whom it was necessary to support the burden of etiquette. Public levees, public processions, and state councils, are the necessary duties of all sovereigns, and the pleasure of many. In Philip they produced only disgust, and he hurried from them to return to his Cabinet, as his private room was termed, there to talk to La Roche of dear France, the fairy land of his imagination, and of French men, and French women, and hunting parties in the forest of St. Germains, and pic nics in the gardens of Marly. Ah! these were happy hours. La Roche was in name, at least, but a valet de chambre; but there were moments, after some such conferences, when he could have put to rout the united influ-

ences of the three great tyrants of poor Philip's existence—his prime minister, his confessor, and his queen.

These circumstances were notorious to the Court world of Madrid, and were, of course, well known to the fair granddaughter of the Duke of Escalona. And upon these she founded her hopes. La Roche, it has been mentioned, had been indebted for his post to the Prince de Chalais, the uncle of the young heiress. He had always felt grateful for the kindness, and had often in private, when the opportunity occurred, expressed his gratitude. To him, then, Donna Teresa determined to have recourse in her difficulty. He had the reputation of being shrewd and prudent. It would be difficult to find a more able; it would be impossible to meet with a more honest, or more disinterested adviser.

The young lady had left Segovia at sunrise on the morning which had followed her interview with her grandfather, and had arrived in Madrid an hour before mid-day. She immediately despatched a confidential

messenger to the palace, requesting the presence of the premier valet de chambre of the king. The summons was speedily attended to, for about an hour after noon La Roche made his appearance.

He was a little swarthy man, of about six and forty, with an ensemble which at the first glance bespoke the man of the world—the satirical mouth; the bright, observant, but laughing eye; the manners, to the last degree polished without being obsequious; the bow profound, and yet easy. He was dressed as a man dresses who has once been very handsome, and is still anxious to conceal by care the approach of years. The green velvet coat, with its large cuffs and pockets richly embroidered with gold; the cravat of Mechlin lace, with ruffles on the breast and wrists of the same material; the full-bottomed wig, perfuming at every motion of the head the ambient air, and with each ringlet as perfect as if it had but just escaped from the hands of the friseur; the long silk stockings drawn over the knees of the small-clothes, and coming half way up the thigh;

the high, square-toed, gold-buckled shoes; the cut-steel-handled sword; the three-cornered hat, and "the nice conduct of the clouded cane,"—all marked him as the beau of a period, when beaux in silks, and velvets, and jewellery, were worth looking at.

"Good morning, Donna Teresa Pacheco," said he, on entering, "or rather, if you will permit me to call you so, Mademoiselle de Chalais. To my French ears it is the prettier designation of the two. And how beautiful you look! How charming! One might see at a glance that you had just come from Paris. Nothing but Versailles could give that air. It is now, let me see, just three and twenty years since I first saw the late Madame la Comtesse, your excellent mother. She was then Mademoiselle de Chalais, the first star in that galaxy of beauty which illuminated the court of the Grand Monarque. You, Mademoiselle Therese, are positively as enchanting. Ah! what conquests you must have made! How many hearts you must have broken!"

"Stop, stop," said the young girl, laugh-

ing, "whatever be the brilliancy of Versailles, Monsieur La Roche, it is plain enough that it is not necessary for a '*belle dame*' to go there to hear fine things said to her. I assure you I have had more compliments paid to me within the last five minutes than during my whole year of absence. And yet," continued she, as her face resumed its gravity, "you will forgive me for saying that there never was a moment when I was able to appreciate them less. You have, no doubt, heard of our misfortune."

La Roche's features at once lost their gaiety, and he bowed. The courtesy, however, was clearly not dictated by mere court etiquette. It was low, but it was also expressive of deep sympathy.

"My grandfather," resumed the young girl, "has been arrested for high treason; but the charge is unfounded."

"By whom is it made?"

"You must know well, Monsieur La Roche. By the Cardinal."

"What I know, Mademoiselle Therese,"

said he with a quiet smile, "is at present of no moment. What is now of importance is your knowledge, not mine. Alberoni, you tell me, has made the charge. Upon what evidence?"

"That, as yet, I have not learned."

"And you have applied to me," said he with an interrogative smile, "to learn for you?"

"Not exactly. And yet it is to seek your aid that I sent for you. Will you lend it me?"

"Mademoiselle," said he, "you know how much I have been indebted to your family. To them I owe entirely my present position, and what little influence I possess, and I need not say how happy it would make me to do what I can to repay their kindness. But to enable me to do so with effect, I must have nothing concealed from me."

Therese looked embarrassed.

"Nothing, I repeat. Alberoni has charged the Grand Chamberlain with treason."

"The loyalty of my grandfather," said the young girl hastily, "is well known. It has been proved a thousand times, and a long

proved loyalty is a sufficient answer to such an accusation."

"Pardon me. To you, to me, my dear Mademoiselle de Chalais, such answer may be sufficient: but it will not satisfy the nation. Worst of all, it will not satisfy the king."

"Not after the sacrifices that the duke has made for him?"

"The sacrifices are past. The danger is said to be present, and Philip is suspicious. I repeat, Alberoni has made a charge. He must have grounds for it. They may be small. They may be insignificant. But, to a certain extent, they must exist."

"There are none, I say."

"There are some, I repeat again. The prime minister has arrested a grandee of the first class. He dared not have done so unless he had had some warrant for so bold an act."

"Oh! Monsieur La Roche, I assure you there is no sufficient warrant. But you abandon me like all the rest. You would leave a falling house."

"You are wrong, Mademoiselle Therese, said her companion. "It is because I would

not leave a falling house that I say so. But after all it is a mere difference of opinion. You think there is no excuse for the Cardinal's conduct. I think there may be. It is possible that I may be wrong; but before I can be convinced of my error, I must know all the facts."

Once more Therese looked distressed.

"Nay, my dear young lady," said her companion, "this is no time for mystery,—nor am I the person with whom you should affect it. You know I am much attached to your mother's family, to yourself, to all your connexions, and you believe me—though I make little protestation of it. You believe me, I say."

Therese bowed.

"Prove that belief by answering my questions. There was a meeting of grandees at the palace of Escalona?"

Again the fair girl made a sign of assent.

"Now comes the real gist of the matter. At that meeting treason was spoken?"

"Not by my grandfather," said Therese, hastily.

"I was right then. It was spoken by some one. Some person present, in short, proposed to renew the scheme of last year, which failed in the hands of the Dukes of Veraguas and Las Torres—a scheme for seizing the king. Who was that person?"

The young girl was silent as if in thought.

La Roche did not interrupt her meditations—He put his hat and cane upon the floor, drew from his capacious pocket a large richly chased gold snuff box, opened it, and three several times refreshed either nostril with a copious pinch. His patience at length appeared exhausted.

"My dear young lady," said he, "this is idle. I must know the name of that person."

"And for what end?"

"To aid your grandfather. If there be treason, let the traitor answer it. Why should the innocent suffer for the guilty?"

"You would denounce him to the king."

"Assuredly."

"Then shall I not denounce him to you."

"Your grandfather's life may depend upon

it," said the premier valet, coldly, and again he had recourse to his snuff box.

Therese looked at him for some minutes earnestly, and then, as the truth dawned on her, she burst into tears.

"These are cruel words, Monsieur La Roche," said she at length, "but they do not move me. To save my grandfather, I would sacrifice, God knows how willingly, every thing, even life itself. But I will not sacrifice honour, nor would the Duke of Escalona accept of safety purchased on such terms. The name I may not tell, and will not tell; but I will reveal this much, that if there were a suggestion made to seize upon the person of the king, the Duke of Escalona had no share in it."

"And what," said La Roche, coldly, "what was the object of the Grand Chamberlain being present at a meeting, at which you confess by implication, treason was mooted; a meeting, moreover, which, as it was held in his own house, must have been summoned by the Duke of Escalona himself."

"That I will answer without reserve. It was to overturn the power of Alberoni."

The premier valet again rapped his box, and took snuff repeatedly, as if to convey the idea, that he did not conceive that the story had much improved by the change in the version.

"You do not think there was any thing wrong in this, Monsieur La Roche," said his companion, anxiously.

La Roche shook his head.

"Alberoni," said the young girl, "is, like my father, but a subject of Spain."

"He is its prime minister."

"You do not think it wrong to oppose a prime minister?"

"The question is not, what is my opinion, but what is the king's.

"He cannot think it wrong."

"Philip is like his grandfather. He is apt to consider disaffection to his minister as disaffection to himself."

"It is an error. It is a monstrous error. He must be disabused of it."

"To do so would be beyond my power.

You furnish me with no facts. You have tied my tongue."

"True—true—nor do I ask it of you. There are facts—but it is only the duke himself who is able to decide how much or how little of them is fit for the king's ear."

"The Grand Chamberlain," said the premier valet, coldly, "is at Segovia."

"But he need not remain there. You can obtain an order for his being brought to Madrid. You will get him an interview with the king."

"Impossible, my dear young lady," said her companion. "The attempt would ruin myself, without benefiting you. I should be deprived of my post ere I were a day older."

"Alas! alas!" cried the girl, clasping her hands in despair, and again bursting into tears! "You abandon me! Every body abandons me. Ah, Monsieur La Roche! Is this the end of all the affection you pretended to my house?"

The premier valet once more applied himself to his box, and snuffed with great

energy. Suddenly he gave a slight start. An idea had apparently suggested itself.

"My dear young lady," said he, "I cannot solicit an interview for your father. Yet there is a person who may, if she will, and I doubt not with success."

Oh! Monsieur La Roche, dear Monsieur La Roche," said the girl, clasping her hands, while her eyes sparkled with delight, "who is that person? She must—she will do me this favour, for I shall beg it on my knees."

"The party is not far off," said the first gentleman of the bed-chamber, with a quiet smile. "It is Donna Teresa Pacheco."

"I?"

"You."

Therese appeared profoundly agitated, and for some time mused deeply.

"It is impossible," said she. "I could not do any thing so unmaidenly as ask a private interview with the king."

"Not to save the life of your grandfather?"

The girl looked at her companion, as if stupified, grasping convulsively the arms of

her chair, and the tears streaming down her cheeks. She raised her head at length, and as her eyes met the keen, searching glance of her companion, she flushed crimson from temple to shoulder.

"Oh! Monsieur La Roche," said she, I need not tell you my feelings; I see you read them. Advise me, guide me. Is it not wrong? Is it not dangerous?"

La Roche rose. He approached his fair hostess, and took her hand, but with great respect. "My dear child," said he "I will tell you now what I have never hinted to human ear. I loved your mother. I, a poor gentleman, dared to love Adéle de Chalais. But the meanest thing that crawls upon earth may look at the sun, and I, while I gazed at her in all the glory of her rank and beauty, forgot my own obscurity. She never knew of my affection; never dreamt of it. How could she, the rich and high-born girl, suspect that Martin la Roche had dared to worship her. She married another. It mattered not. For her sake I loved.—I love her child. And to that child

I would give no counsel that would not be given by a father. I will procure for you an interview with the king, and have no fears, my daughter, for I will be at the door. I will listen to every word that is uttered, and be ready to aid if there be danger. But there is none. Had Philip been like the other princes of his house, I would not have counselled it. But in such matters at least, he is sinless. Have no fears then. Go. Plead your grandfather's cause, and if your entreaties fail, plead boldly, for Philip is a child that ever obeys the strong will."

"You advise me to go then," said Therese, doubtfully.

"I do. And I pledge myself for your safety."

"And when will be the interview?"

"That depends on circumstances. But at six to-night, be ready. It is the hour of the queen's supper—and her Majesty ever sups alone. The king loves not to see her eat, for he, in his fastidiousness, fancies that ruby lips should be fed upon air, while her Majesty, on the contrary, if the viands be

good, would play the trencherman with any muleteer in Spain. But, of the time I will inform you hereafter, and recollect, dress yourself in the costume of Versailles; for the king has a soft heart towards France, and the best arguments you could utter would not weigh with him so much as a bit of Paris millinery."

And the heiress of the house of Pacheco and her new-found adviser parted.

## CHAPTER XI.

### PHILIP V.

We must once more change the scene to the palace. We have already mentioned that the royal edifice was divided in the interior into two court yards. That on the left was appropriated to the residence of the royal family, and all around it was a piazza or colonnade, from the centre of which a broad double staircase led to the first floor. At the top this opened into a long gallery, called the Gallery of Pictures. It was the waiting-room for the nobility, and through it persons seeking an audience were conducted to the king, whose apartment was at the further end of it.

The Cabinet, as this was called, was a room of great size, and furnished with a brilliancy of decoration that still lives in history. The walls were hung with paintings of the Italian and Spanish schools in such profusion that little of the velvet behind them was discernable. All were works of great masters, but there was one, a chef-d'œuvre of Titian, that occupied the place of honour, and most riveted attention. It represented the toilette of a beautiful woman, allegorically painted as Venus. The feet, the arms, and the bust were without clothing, while the golden hair, unfettered by band or comb, fell in graceful profusion upon the neck and shoulders. Around, with assiduous zeal, fluttered the attendant Cupids, some fastening her sandals, some wreathing flowers in her hair; while others held a mirror in air to enable the divinity to judge of the success of the efforts of their companions. The frame was of solid silver, deeply chased, and gilt at intervals, so as to add to its richness. It was the portrait of the Princess of Eboli, the favourite of Philip II.

The rest of the furniture blazed forth in all the magnificence of the Louis Quatorze style. The carpet was from the Gobelins—the mirrors from Venice—the hangings and drapery were of crimson velvet—the chairs and sofas massive, high-backed, carved, and gilt—the cabinets marqueterie or ormolu—the panels of the window-shutters filled with landscapes from the pictures of Watteau. A fire-place had also been added by its present occupant, and instead of the eternal brazier, some logs blazed cheerfully on the hearth. One other addition had been suggested by the devotion, or, as some called it, the bigotry of the king. In a corner stood a small altar, having above it, in gold, a richly sculptured representation of Christ on the cross, on either side of which, though it was scarce two hours past mid-day, burned a wax taper.

It is to this room we are now to conduct the reader. In front of the fire, buried in the recesses of a large arm-chair, sat a man, apparently about thirty; though, as the wind had never been permitted to visit his cheek too roughly, it is probable that five or six

years might have been safely added to the reckoning. The face was of even feminine beauty. The lofty forehead, the arched and delicately-traced eye-brow, the large blue and sleepy eye, the chiselled nostril, and the mouth were each and all specimens of Nature's happiest handiwork. The chin only was cast in a coarser mould; it was round, full, and somewhat heavy, indicating, according to Lavater, a sensual temperament. The rest of the person was in no degree inferior to the features in the grace of its outlines. The hands were long, small, and delicate, the chest rounded, the waist taper, the limbs well formed.

The solitary occupant of the chamber was dressed richly, but without display, in a coat and small-clothes of black velvet, and wore a full-bottomed wig of auburn-coloured hair. On his left breast was a diamond star, and across his right shoulder a broad, embroiderd sword-belt, while the jewelled rapier that belonged to it lay on a table near him. His costume, in short, was that of a French gentleman of the day. In one

particular only, and that an important one, it possessed a feature of its own. Around the throat, instead of the usual long cravat of rich Mechlin lace, was a stiff black stock, surmounted at top by two small white bands, similar to those worn by our clergy. This neck-covering was called " the Golilla," and was in Spain the necessary appendage of royalty, probably no agreeable one, as its stiffness and height must have affected the jaws of the wearer as unpleasantly as a black military stock does those of a new-caught militia man in the first week of his drill.

It was Philip V., King of Spain and the Indies.

Seldom has a more contemptible sovereign filled a throne. Yet something might be alleged in excuse. The Duke of Anjou, as he was termed in his youth, was naturally proud and ambitious, of considerable ability, and with great powers of observation; but these, his better qualities, had been nipped in the blossom by the jealous character of his grandfather's court, where the princes of the blood were carefully kept uneducated and in

the background, lest by their talents or their presence they might dim that halo of glory which was supposed to encircle the Grand Monarque. Thus debarred by state policy from thinking and acting, Philip gradually lost alike the power and the will to think or to act; and concentrated the little energy which remained to him in a passionate attachment to the beautiful grounds and hunting forests which surrounded his royal prison —to the limited circle which was permitted to share it with him—and, most of all, to the tittle-tattle, to the minute scandals, the paltry jealousies which formed the staple subject of that circle's interest and conversation. Such tastes and habits, combined as they were with the consciousness of high rank and a lingering nobility of thought, formed a strange medley; and produced a character not altogether dissimilar to that of our own James I. It was one that augured ill for dignity or happiness; but the youthful Bourbon, in addition to weaknesses the result of education, had constitutional foibles which made his lot even more pitiable

than that of the Stuart. He had inherited the singular mixture of love and devotion which characterized his grandfather. Yet Philip had neither a La Vallière nor a Montespan. On the contrary, he was really and rigidly faithful to the queen. It was merely in imagination, that he was inconstant to her. The aberrations, mental only though they were, were as severely punished as if they had been realities; for while the fervent temperament of the would-be Lothario made him regard every daughter of Eve as a Venus, his still more fervent bigotry whispered in his ear, ere the flitting emotion were well passed, that it was a deadly sin, which perilled the salvation of his soul, and could be atoned only by instant and heart rending contrition. Thus the poor king passed life, the victim of antagonistic influences—ever vibrating, as his feeble spirit felt the alternate attraction, between ambition and indolence—between a jealousy of respect and a passion for gossip—between woman and a crucifix—love and prayer.

At the moment at which we first present

him to our readers, his Majesty seemed in no amiable mood, for he yawned repeatedly, stretched out first one limb to the fire, then another, and from time to time changed his position in the chair, as if he had discovered something like hardness in its downy cushions.

"What can have become of La Roche?" said he, to himself. "He has been away these two hours, and yet the rascal knows that I require somebody to amuse me. What can have become of him? Where can he be gone?"

Suddenly the king's face brightened, for a step was heard in the gallery. It was followed by a gentle tap at the door, and on permission being given, La Roche entered.

"Ah, it is you at last, La Roche," said the king. "How dare you, Sir, be so long absent, and without my permission?"

"I believed that your Majesty would be taking the siesta, and asleep."

"Pshaw! you know I detest the siesta, and everything Spanish. And to be absent when I was so much in need of you; when

I had such absolute necessity for your presence."

"May I ask," said his attendant, "what has gone wrong?"

"My health, La Roche; my health is breaking fast;" and the young king once more sank back in his chair with the exhausted air of one whose last hour was come.

"It gives me the most poignant distress to hear it," said his attendant; "but will your Majesty permit me to say that it could scarcely have been injured by my absence."

"My majesty will permit you to say nothing of the sort. My health *was* injured by your absence. Is not the body affected by the mind? Answer me that—and if it be true, would not my sufferings for the last two hours have been less, if you had been here, as you ought to have been, to amuse me. This is a miserable monarchy, this monarchy of Spain! and yet it had once some sensible things about it. Olivarez and the Cardinal Duke used to employ spies in every part of Madrid for the purpose of collecting all the amusing stories of the capital,

and with the cream of these did they chase away the tedium of my royal predecessors and namesakes, Philip III. and Philip IV. Ah! in these days kings had true friends. How the world is changed!" And the young monarch raised his half-sleeping eyes and gazed at his valet with a look of reproach. But the exertion seemed too much for him, for once more the eyes drooped, and the exhausted hypochondriac with a slight groan, again sunk back into a corner of his chair.

"The nobles of whom your Majesty speaks were ministers of state," replied La Roche, "I am only a valet de chambre."

"The more reason for you to be ashamed of yourself. Ministers of state have a world of things to do. They must hold audiences and give orders—aye, and write dispatches too—God help them? I find the mere signing them exhausting enough—and a thousand other matters beside. But you, sir, what on earth have you got to do, but to amuse me?"

La Roche bowed profoundly, and with the

air of a man who sees his fault and acknowledges it.

"Well, you are contrite, I see; I will pass it over for once. And now you have been abroad—gossipping, no doubt, and hearing all the news. Come tell me everything." And the young king's eyes raised themselves for a moment with a look of interest and curiosity.

"I have, your Majesty—I have heard news—and they are of the most astounding and painful nature."

"Then don't tell me them, La Roche," said the king," raising himself with sudden energy. "Nay," said he, as he saw from his attendant's face that the unwelcome information was to be pressed on him, "I will not hear them, man. I cannot. My nerves will not stand it. I am melancholy enough already."

The discomfited valet de chambre bowed, and for a minute there was silence. The curiosity of the young monarch once more roused him to activity.

"But you must have seen something

amusing, La Roche—you must have been at the Puerta del Sol. What were they saying at the wine shops? What was doing at the great Fountain? Some of my fair subjects no doubt, using their knives and cutting each other's throats from jealousy. Faugh! the wretches!"

"No, your Majesty, they were all in good humour—all was peace. They were talking a little scandal—that was all."

"Ha! scandal, let's hear it."

"But it was of a reverend prelate."

"Capital!" said the king, rubbing his hands.

"A prince of the church."

"Better and better."

"A friend of your Majesty's.

"Ho! ho! ho! best of all—so open your budget, man, and out with it. Who was it?"

"Alberoni."

The king's countenance fell.

"Ha!" said he in a tone of anger, "did the unwashed canaille dare to murmur against him. Did they forget that he was

*my* prime minister. This is too insolent, I must correct them, I must rouse myself—and—" and the poor king, as if to suit the action to the word, half raised himself in his chair, but the effort was too great for his indolence, and he once more sank back into his seat, giving evidence of the immensity of the exertion by a prolonged yawn.

La Roche's shrewd black eye marked every movement, but he said nothing—he knew his man well.

" Well, La Roche?" said the king, after a pause, and in a tone of interrogation.

" I wait your Majesty's orders," said the attendant, as he bowed profoundly.

" You said something about the Manolas."

" I did, sire."

" They were abusing Alberoni."

" They were, your Majesty."

The king coloured, hesitated an instant, and then, as if his curiosity were stronger than the dignity about which he affected to be so anxious, he said in an irritated tone,—

"Well, you fool, why do not you tell me what they said?"

"After your Majesty's remark, I thought it might displease you."

"It does displease me. It was too bold—too insolent—but as my just indignation cannot make the words unsaid, I may as well hear what they were."

"They were singing ballads," said the tantalising valet.

"I can understand that."

"Pasquinades—"

"Of course."

"Broad jokes—"

"La Roche, you scoundrel," shouted the king, losing his temper, "hand me my cane that I may hit you over the head."

"And in what," said the premier valet, with a face of well-acted astonishment, "have I had the misfortune to offend you?"

"You rogue, you rascal, you know well enough. These ballads—these pasquinades—these broad jokes—must have had words and ideas to represent them."

"Of course."

"Then tell me them immediately, or I will discharge you on the spot."

La Roche gave a grin.

"Since your Majesty insists on it I will obey. They were giving an account of the thrashing that the Cardinal got the other day from the Duke of Escalona. And they said such absurd things, your Majesty, that I could not help laughing. 'A gardener's boy,' said the one—'The cook of Vendome,' said another—'The ugly dog,' said a third."

"Nay," said the king, turning half round in his chair, and regarding himself with undisguised satisfaction in the mirror, "there is no denying it. The fellow is prodigiously ugly."

"He has got no neck," said La Roche.

"Well, his neck certainly is short."

"And a head like a large Dutch cheese."

"Nay, I must confess that it is too round and too big."

"And then his swarthy sun-burnt hide,"

"Why there is no disputing it," said

Philip, once more turning to survey himself in the mirror, and coaxingly passing his fingers over his face. "A fine skin is necessary to beauty."

"And without beauty there can be no real dignity."

"True, true, La Roche."

"And without dignity no man can be an efficient ruler over others."

"You are a just observer, La Roche."

"Or can discharge with effect the duties of a prime minister."

"I suspect you are not far wrong, La Roche."

"A fellow so ugly, so squat, so swarthy, is only fit for a gardener's boy, and if he did venture into a king's presence he deserved being well thrashed for his impudence."

"Well, after all, perhaps, you are right."

"It must have been a funny scene that the other day between the duke and the Parmesan."

"It was, it was, La Roche," said the king eagerly.

"Did the old man hit hard."

"Had he been the Cid himself smiting the Moors he could not have struck harder."

"One thump on the shoulder," said the valet.

"Another on the head," chuckled Philip.

"This on the arm."

"That on the nose."

And the king and his attendant burst into a loud fit of laughter.

"A fine old noble," said the valet de chambre, when the mirth abated, "your Majesty is fortunate in such a subject."

"Yes, I think I am."

"A man I respect and love."

"So do I."

"Then your Majesty will order his immediate release from the castle of Segovia,"

"The what!" said the king in unutterable astonishment.

"The castle of Segovia," repeated the valet.

"What has that," said Philip, "to do with the Grand Chamberlain?"

"Was not your Majesty aware that he had been sent there by Alberoni?"

"Never heard a word of it till this moment."

"But you will order his immediate release."

The king fidgetted uneasily in his chair.

"Alberoni," continued the eager valet.

"You should say 'the Cardinal,' La Roche," said the king, coldly.

"But your Majesty will order the release of the duke."

"You know I never interfere with the affairs of state. There must have been reasons for his arrest."

"I am told none; but there is one who is better able to inform you on the subject, and who seeks an audience of your Majesty."

"I detest audiences."

"It is Donna Teresa Pacheco, the old man's granddaughter."

"It is impossible, La Roche. She will be weeping and shrieking. There will be a scene, and I cannot bear scenes. They ruin my nerves."

"Yet she is the only child of an aged and faithful servant."

"What has that to do with the matter, La Roche. What is the use of old and faithful servants, but to give prosperity and happiness, and comfort to their masters. And where would be my comfort or my happiness, I ask, if I admitted this girl with her entreaties, and tears, and lamentations. It would destroy my night's sleep I tell you. I doubt if I should recover it in four-and twenty hours."

The attendant surveyed his master with something like contempt, and then again for a minute his features wore an expression of deep sorrow.

"I will not give it up yet," said he to himself; "the girl must see this heartless brute." With the words his face resumed its smiles, and he once more approached the king.

"Your Majesty," said he, in a gay tone, "I recollect now something in my morning's ramble that will, I am confident, give you pleasure. I met some friends who had just returned from Paris."

"Ha!" said Philip, raising himself with

eager interest, "What happiness! La Roche. Well, what did they say? What did you hear?"

"They knew everything, they had seen everything."

"Ah! dear—dear—France, how I envy them. Well, speak. What told they you of Versailles?"

"The palace on the outside is the same as ever; but the inside, how changed. The Oeil de Bœuf has no occupants."

"And Marly?"

"They say the Regent has advertised it for sale. He would pull it down for the sake of the materials."

"Pull down Marly!" shouted Philip, in sudden anger. "Oh the wretch, the beast, the scoundrel! If I had him here I could strangle him. Beautiful Marly!" continued he, as he once more resumed his usual listless attitude of repose, "how I loved it. Do you remember, La Roche, our fishing parties at the pond in the park, and our picnics in the gardens, and our promenades on the long terrace with Olympia de Beau-

villiers. Ah! these were happy times. I was not a king then."

"No, sire—you had nothing to do but to enjoy yourself."

"Do I do so now, La Roche?" said the monarch, with a face as rueful as the knight of La Mancha.

"Quite the contrary."

"Do you ever see me happy?"

"Never," said the sympathising attendant. "I am ready to make oath that there is not a more wretched king in Christendom."

"I knew you would say so," said Philip, seemingly comforted by the remark. "Yet how different it was formerly. Then we were happy; and Olympia! how happy she was, and how beautiful! Ah! La Roche, did your friends see Olympia?"

"They did."

"And what said they of her?"

"The error was inexcusable on my part, but, to confess the truth, I forgot to ask."

"What a selfish being you are, La Roche," said the king in accents of strong disgust,

"How I detest a man without a heart! And what else heard you?"

"My friends saw your nephew, the King of France, his Majesty Lewis XV.

"Ha! the boy must be well grown now. What say they of him?"

"They saw him dance at a state ball at the Tuilleries, and they speak of him in raptures—a *vrai cupidon* they describe him—the most perfectly graceful and beautiful young man ever seen on earth."

The king's cheek flushed crimson with sudden jealousy.

"Nonsense, La Roche," said he, in an angry tone. "If you hear people utter such follies you should not repeat them. Did your friends ever see *me?*"

"I believe," said La Roche, bowing profoundly, "they never enjoyed that good fortune."

"Then they shall enjoy it now. I will not permit the world to be gulled into the monstrous error that my nephew is the handsomest man in Europe. No, no. It

concerns truth, that such false reports should be crushed at once. You may introduce your too credulous acquaintances when you please."

"The queen sups at six, would it then be convenient to your Majesty to receive?"

"Perfectly."

"And your Majesty may wish to ask some questions about Marly?"

"To be sure I shall."

"And you could hear if Madame de Beauvilliers has still, like your Majesty, all the charms of youth?"

"Of course I can. So at six, La Roche, at six, do you hear, precisely." And the king, in his eagerness, accompanied his attendant to the door.

The premier valet de chambre bowed low and retired.

"Dear, dear, France!" said Philip to himself, "I shall then hear of you again. I shall once more have the happiness to converse with one who has of late breathed your air and seen your sky. And you too, beloved Marly! What delightful recollec-

tions are associated with your name. It was on your terrace that I first saw the beautiful Olympia. It was beneath your chestnut trees that I first whispered to her my love, and pressed my lips to her yielding fingers. What a splendid creature she was! What eyes! What a mouth! What a neck!"

All at once the king's face changed, and his features became convulsed as if by a sudden spasm.

"Miserable man that I am!" cried he in a half shriek, as he struck his breast with his clenched fists. "What thoughts are these!" and he hurried to the altar at the corner of the room, and flinging himself on his knees before it, bent to the earth, exclaiming, in accents of the most poignant remorse, *Peccavi Domine—miserere mei.*

## CHAPTER XII.

### A YOUNG LADY AT COURT.

It was six o'clock in the evening—the king had once more resumed his favourite lounging attitude, in his great chair. His face, too, wore its usual irritable expression; that of a man who does nothing, and yet frets perpetually, in consequence of the very indolence which he himself cherishes.

In the chamber itself there was little alteration, save that the early evening of a November day had already set in, and brought with it its usual accompaniments. The shutters of the windows were closed, and the room lighted by a chandelier suspended from the centre of the ceiling.

As six chimed from a time-piece which was fastened against the wall, and whose fantastically carved and gilt frame formed one of the ornaments of the apartment, Philip's restlessness re-doubled. Like all men who are ever behind time, he was a very martinet in exacting in others punctuality, and as soon as the moment had passed which had been appointed for the reception of his visitors, he could not help expressing aloud his annoyance at their non-appearance.

"Six o'clock past and La Roche not come yet. If those French friends of his should have disappointed him. The very thought of it is sufficient to drive one mad. My nerves will never stand this constant worrying—and such a chance too for a good gossip —for the queen said she was hungry to-night, and I know what that means,"—and Philip sighed. But the sentimentalism was not long lived—curiosity returned, and with it irritation; for the king fidgetted restlessly in his chair, casting his eye on the clock, and exclaiming at intervals—"It is too

bad of La Roche. I will never forgive him."

His Majesty's soliloquy was interrupted by the door being gently opened, and La Roche entered, followed by a figure in a long dark mantle, the hood of which was thrown over the head. But it was dropped as soon as the door had been re-closed, and there appeared beneath it the features of the fair heiress of the Duke of Escalona.

Therese had never looked more beautiful. She was attired, according to La Roche's recommendation, in the costume of the court of Louis XIV.; and what is so well calculated to show off to advantage female beauty? The rich silk dress, with its voluminous folds; the diamond-edged stomacher; the short sleeves, with the lace manchettes descending to the elbow; the necklace; the bracelets; and last and most beautiful of all, the hair, showing the full height of the forehead, clustered on the temples in rich thick curls, and descending to the bosom upon either side, in one long graceful ringlet.

The young lady, as her disguise fell back,

curtseyed to the ground, and La Roche catching up the mantle disappeared.

It is difficult to express the astonishment of the king. He at once saw the trick that had been played him, and that he had been entrapped into granting the very interview which he had been so anxious to avoid. His first feeling was that of anger, but who could be angry with a being so beautiful? more especially when her look, dress, air, brought back a thousand cherished recollections of his boyhood—the beauty of the capricious Montespan—the grace of Madame de Sevigné. The king bowed low, and like a king, for Philip could on occasions, assume the courtly manners of his grandsire, and then, with a flushed cheek, and a voice that was slightly tremulous, he said,

"To whom have I the honour of addressing myself?"

"Sire—I am Donna Teresa Pacheco."

The king bowed.

"The grand-daughter of the Duke of Escalona."

The king bowed again.

"The Grand Chamberlain, your Majesty, has been wrongfully arrested, and sent to the castle of Segovia. He is confident that the violence is without the knowledge of your Majesty, and he begs permission to throw himself at your Majesty's feet, and ask justice for himself and on his enemies."

Philip coloured crimson, hesitated for an instant, stammered forth some inarticulate words, and then was suddenly silent.

"I had not the good fortune," said Therese, "to hear what your Majesty did me the honour to address to me."

Once more the poor king screwed up his courage to the speaking point.

"There must be some reason, Madam," said he, in a faint voice, "for the arrest of the Grand Chamberlain."

"There is a reason, Sire, but not a sufficient one to warrant the outrage. My grandfather, like all good subjects of your Majesty, expressed himself in strong terms as the enemy of the Cardinal."

"In that," said Philip, in the tone of offended dignity, "the duke forgot his usual

discretion, for he should have recollected that the Cardinal is the minister of his master."

"Yet, Sire, forgive me for saying, that the kings, your predecessors, have occasionally had bad ministers, and—" and the girl stopped suddenly, and coloured.

"And you would insinuate," said Philip, in sudden anger, "that I, like they, had blundered in my selection?"

"Far be it from me," said Therese, modestly, "to have such presumption. I do not doubt the wisdom of your Majesty, but—"

"But what?"

"The best wisdom can only exercise its judgment when it has fully before it the matters with which it has to deal, and these, forgive me for adding, have in the present case been studiously concealed from you."

"No—Madam," said Philip, as his natural obstinacy began to display itself, and gave increased firmness to his voice, "I will permit you to say nothing of the sort. I.

am too clear sighted not to be acquainted with the most minute details of the affairs of this kingdom."

"And do you approve, Sire, of the acts of Alberoni?"

"Madam," said Philip, with a strong emphasis on his words, "the Cardinal is my minister, and that is a sufficient answer to the question."

"And you sanction his arrest of my grandfather?"

The king hesitated for a moment. "The Cardinal, I repeat, Madam, is a great statesman, and I approve his acts."

"He may be all that you believe him, for I do not dispute your Majesty's better judgment. And yet, Sire, the best of statesmen have occasionally erred. Your Majesty has heard but one side of the question; will you not permit my grandfather to state to you the other?"

Philip was silent.

"No, no," continued Therese, falling on her knees at the king's feet, "you will not condemn unheard an old and faithful

servant?" And the tears streamed down the young girl's cheeks.

The king appeared to hesitate, but his manner exhibited not agitation, but annoyance.

"Rise, Donna Teresa Pacheco," said he, at length, "I command you to rise."

"No," said Therese, "not till I have obtained a favourable answer from your Majesty. You know well," continued she, speaking hurriedly, "how long, and how faithfully, my grandfather has served you. When the Austrian was in Madrid, he left his palace to be plundered by the invader, to follow your fortunes. When your treasury was impoverished, he melted down his service of silver plate, the cherished heirlooms of centuries, to equip your troops. His only sons, my father and my uncle, died on the field of battle, in your cause; and of all his race there remains but myself—a poor weak girl. Would you break my heart by doing him an injury? Or would you bring down to the grave with sorrow the grey hairs of an old man, who never lays his

head on his pillow, without praying that yourself, and your son, and your son's son, may reign long in the land."

Philip's features, while the girl was speaking, exhibited no softening. On the contrary, the mouth assumed a harsher outline, and the whole face wore the expression of sullen obstinacy.

"I am sorry, Madam," said he, in a freezing tone, "that I cannot grant your request."

"Then," said the young girl, as she sprang to her feet, while her cheek crimsoned, and her eye flashed fire, "I will no longer degrade myself by making it. But I might have expected the result of my errand, for I sought justice at the hands of the house of Bourbon."

"Madam," said the king, haughtily, "none is more ready to grant it when it is deserved. Mine is a family that has ever been distinguished for the rigorous discharge of its duties, and therefore Heaven has blessed it."

"Has heaven blessed it?" said Therese,—

"I deny it. It may have given to it for a time prosperity—but what has been the end?"

"A great—a noble one. Is there any more deserving of envy?"

"Is there any less so? Your race has had rank and power. God gave them fleets, and armies, and a throne. But he found them selfish and hard-hearted; they forgot the benefits he had bestowed, for they did not do what they ought to have done, disseminate them amongst others; or protect those of whom he intended them to be the protectors. Therefore has his hand been heavy upon them, and upon you. Your father, your mother, your brother, nearly every member of your family were struck down by an inscrutable disease; and the very king who was the greatest of your ancestry, and whose glories are your boast, died a beggar; with neither the gentle offices of love, nor the words of religion, to cheer his latter hours. The woman he had raised to a throne, from being the wife of a deformed buffoon, deserted him. The priest, to gratify whom

he had sacrificed a million of his subjects, alike fled from his death-bed; and the corpse of him whom you call the Grand Monarque, was carried to its last resting place, not with the pomp of court ceremonial, or amid the tears of sorrowing subjects, but—unseen—unknown—in the dead of night—lest the coffin might be violated by an infuriated people, whom he had permitted evil ministers to plunder and tyrannise over with impunity. Such too, Sire, have been your acts, and such also will be your punishment. I will leave to God to grant the justice that I am denied by man."

It is difficult to express the effect upon Philip of Therese's words. The sudden and ill-explained death of almost every member of his family—the misfortunes that had clouded the last years of Louis XIV.'s life—the ingratitude which marked his death-bed—and the indecent, the almost monstrous, neglect of his obsequies, had often formed the subject of the solitary young king's musings: and his superstitious temperament had ever been disposed to look at them as

direct visitations from the hand of the Almighty. But most of all, however, was he alarmed by the allusion to the desertion of Le Tellier. It was generally understood that the confessor of Louis XIV. had left his penitent in the extreme agony; and to the bigoted mind of Philip, to pass from this world, without the presence of the church, was equivalent to perdition in the next. When therefore Therese began to draw a parallel between him and his predecessors, and to predict for him a similar fate —his cheek paled, his limbs trembled, and mind and body, became the subject of the most extravagant terror. The new feeling paralized him at first, but as he recovered himself, the king moved towards the young girl as rapidly as his feeble, uncertain steps would permit, and exclaimed in a voice almost inarticulate from agitation—

"Recall those dreadful words, Donna Teresa; I pray, I beseech you to recall them."

"On the contrary," said his companion haughtily. "I repeat them—I leave my cause with God. He will give me that

justice which is denied by man." And she moved towards the door.

The king hurried after her. He seized hold of her hand, and dropping on his knees at her feet, said in agonized accents, "No—no, Donna Teresa, you go not; you shall not leave this room till you have recalled those dreadful words. Indeed—indeed they are not deserved. I am not unjust; I am not ungrateful. And I would prove it. I will yield to all your wishes. I will admit your grandfather to an interview; I will set him free; I will not permit a minister to trample on my people; I will dismiss—" but his Majesty's sentence was not destined to be concluded, for angry voices were heard without, and, 'ere the king could change his position, the door opened with violence, and a man entered.

The unwelcome intruder was Alberoni.

The Cardinal, as our readers by this time know, was indebted for his power solely to his influence over the king; and, with a mind so unstable as Philip's, that influence could only be preserved by the rigorous ex-

clusion of any one who might be able or willing to sway him to other counsels. To secure an isolation so necessary to his safety, Alberoni had gained the officers of the palace in immediate attendance on the sovereign, and had instructed them to admit none to an audience of royalty unless they bore the countersign of the minister; while, to guard against unexpected dangers, the door of "the Cabinet" was rigorously watched by numerous and well-paid agents. Some of these had witnessed the introduction of the mantle-shrouded figure, and they had hastened to convey the intelligence to their employer.

The news embarrassed him.

Who the visitor might be, the Cardinal did not know; but the mystery proved an enemy, and the only object of an enemy could be to plot against his absolute authority. There was danger then; yet what could be done to avert it? To leave the party to continue their machinations uninterrupted was to increase the peril; and yet it was not safe, unwished and unsent for, to

break in upon the royal privacy. Philip cared little about parting with the reality of power; but he enforced with nervous jealousy the etiquette which gave him the appearance of it. In what light might he view the intrusion of the Cardinal? There was danger on either side; but that of incurring Philip's anger appeared the lesser of the two.

"I will risk it," said he to himself. "If there be a storm, it will soon pass away. So I will e'en risk it, the more especially as I suspect that this cloaked visitor has something to do with the meeting of the grandees and the arrest of Escalona."

He had accordingly proceeded round the gallery that encircled the court-yard, and connected his own apartments with those of the sovereign. At the door of the royal closet he found La Roche in attendance. The sturdy valet de chambre refused either to admit or to announce him; but he had to deal with a spirit even more decided than his own. The quick-eared prelate had heard the voice of the king speaking in the accents of entreaty; and unable any longer to con-

trol either his fears or his curiosity, he had himself opened the door, and burst into the chambe r.

It would be difficult to paint his surprise when, instead of the veteran statesman, whom he expected to have found within, he discovered the companion of the king to be a young girl. With any other sovereign, the attitude of the monarch and the singular loveliness of his companion would have suggested the idea that the present tête-à-tête had more to do with love than diplomacy. But Alberoni knew his master too well to doubt for a moment his rigorous propriety; and even had such doubts existed, the first glance at the lady's face would have served to remove them. Prior to her visit to France the Cardinal had often seen Donna Teresa Pacheco. He recognised her in a instant; and his quick-witted intellect at once led him to guess at the real cause of her presence in the king's closet, and the object of the interview. He was not long left in doubt with regard to either.

Scarcely had the prelate entered when

Philip rose from his knees; but it was not with the timid mien with which he generally met his prime minister. Superstition had roused his feelings, and the new breach of etiquette but added to their power; and it was with the tone and dignity of Louis XIV. in his haughtiest days, that he demanded the reason of the intrusion.

The Cardinal coloured. The proud priest had been spoiled by prosperity. He was not accustomed to be spoken to in the tone of a master; and his self-love felt the mortification doubly, because it was destined to be listened to by other ears, and witnessed by other eyes, than his own. His presence of mind, however, did not desert him. Sinking upon one knee for an instant, as etiquette required in the audiences of churchmen, he resumed his usual upright attitude, and in a tone at once firm and insinuating, he said,—

"I have to offer a thousand apologies to your Majesty: but most important despatches have this instant arrived, and I was anxious not to lose a moment in receiving

your Majesty's instructions with regard to them."

"Whatever might have been their consequence," said Philip, haughtily, "Cardinal Alberoni should have recollected that the king was the person most interested in their contents, and that he should have been consulted as to the time when he was disposed to listen to them. But it is best as it is," added he, with a malicious smile, "for we were about to command the presence of your Eminence. We have just been informed that the Grand Chamberlain has been sent to Segovia. The report is almost too extravagant to be credited; but your Eminence can inform us. Is it true?"

Alberoni bowed.

"And upon what grounds," said the king, in an angry tone, "has one of my oldest and most faithful subjects been sent to a dungeon?"

"It pains me to say it to your Majesty," said the minister, in an apologetic tone, "it was for plotting treason against your royal person."

"I do not, and I will not, believe it," said Philip; "and my orders are that he be instantly set free."

"Your Majesty—" began Alberoni, in a voice which bespoke opposition to the royal mandate; but he was instantly interrupted.

"I will not listen to a word, Sir; I will be obeyed."

"No one disputes your Majesty's orders," said the Cardinal: "but—"

"Not a word," almost screamed the king, crimsoning with passion. "I will be obeyed."

The minister saw that it was necessary to bend for the moment to the storm.

"Your Majesty's wishes are law," said he. "Will you condescend to express them?"

"The instant freedom of the Duke of Escalona. You can write now and sign the order."

"My signature of itself would avail nothing, your Majesty. It must be coun-

tersigned by the secretary of state, Don Michael Fernandez Duran, Marquis of Tolosa."

"And when will the proper document be ready?"

"To-night," said the minister; — "the whole of the formalities can be gone through to-night."

"Be it so; and see it despatched before you sleep. And now, Donna Teresa," said the king, addressing his fair companion, who had been an agitated spectatress of the conference, "I will not detain you longer. By midnight the Duke of Escalona shall be free."

"Ah! Sire," replied the young girl, as she stooped low and kissed the king's hand, "how can I express my gratitude to your Majesty? But is it certain? Am I assured of it? Will there be no delay?" And her eye glanced uneasily at Alberoni.

"None, Madam; I pledge you my royal word for his liberty. And now I will bid you good night."

With the words he rang the bell.

"La Roche," said he to his attendant as he entered, "where waits the sedan-chair of Donna Teresa Pacheco?"

"Below, your Majesty."

"Order it to the Gallery of Pictures at once."

The premier valet retired, and instantly returned to announce that his Majesty's instructions were obeyed.

"Now, Donna Teresa," said the king, "allow me to conduct you."

As he spoke he took hold of the points of the fingers of the young lady's left-hand and, with a grace worthy of the Duke of Richelieu, led her to her chair. Its four porters stood bare-headed. On either side, on their knees, were as many pages, each bearing a wax taper, while a dozen lacqueys, carrying torches, and armed with long rapiers, waited behind.

"You will remember your promise, Sire?" said the girl, timidly.

"I will remember, and perform it," was

the answer; and the heiress of the house of Pacheco entered her velvet-covered vehicle, and departed to her home. Joy sparkled in the young girl's eyes, and she looked confident of the future. Alas! that she should have forgotten the words of Holy Writ, "Put not your trust in princes."

## CHAPTER XII.

### A KING AND HIS MINISTER.

It can easily be understood with what feelings of deep pain, Alberoni had witnessed the result of the conference narrated in the preceding chapter. The stake for which he played was immense. Wealth — power — perhaps life, was on the cards; for the offence of the Grand Chamberlain was, in fact, a conspiracy against the supremacy of the minister, and if that offence were pardoned, the supremacy was gone.

He was not a man, however, to resign easily the game, and he had employed the

brief interval which had elapsed during the king's absence in meditating on his reception, and its probable consequences.

"I never saw Philip so decided," said he to himself; "he assumed the tone of a master; were he to continue to act the part of one, I am a lost man. And this girl has witnessed all—has been the cause of all. It is the second time that I am indebted for evil to her accursed race. But I will pay them back," said he, as he clenched his fist, "I will pay them back, and when I have made the old villain shorter by a head, I shall have taught the grandees of Spain a lesson which may, possibly, make them hesitate in future ere they attack my supremacy. And the king, too, with his customary and perpetual 'I will be obeyed.' Pshaw!—I have heard the words too often to fear them. But I must rekindle his hatred of the Duke of Orleans. I must rouse his ambition. They are cards that have never failed me yet, and are the only ones left me. But here he comes."

As he spoke, Philip re-entered the closet,

and, closing the door, took his seat with an air of great dignity.

There was silence for a minute.

"Well, your Eminence," said the king, in an irritated tone, "considering your anxiety to see me, methinks you lose valuable time. What are the news you spoke of?"

"Most important, your Majesty. Your untiring enemy the Duke of Orleans has once more been at his dirty work."

"Impossible!" said Philip; "with a truce scarce three months old, he would not already renew the war?"

"He would do worse, Sire. Open violence can always be successfully met. It is more difficult to battle secret treachery."

"Ha! he is plotting, you say? But how —when—why?"

"He has despatched a secret envoy to your court."

"His object?"

"To corrupt your servants, and thereby impede the action of your Majesty's government."

"And this envoy—have you heard of his

arrival in Spain? Can you tell of his whereabouts?"

"His present residence," said Alberoni, with a malicious smile, "is pretty well known; it is the tower of Segovia."

"You have arrested him, then?"

Alberoni bowed.

"Where?"

"At the house of the Duke of Escalona.

There was a pause, as if Philip had felt annoyed by the answer. After a while, the king continued:—

"When?"

"The day before yesterday."

"What did he at the Grand Chamberlain's?"

"He was present at the conspiracy—I ought to say at the meeting of the grandees, presided over by the head of the house of Pacheco."

Philip fidgeted uneasily in his chair.

"The Duke of Orleans," continued the Cardinal, "is your Majesty's cousin; but, though a kinsman, he is less than kind. He it is who is the cause of these perpetual

attempts against your Majesty's government."

"Yes," said Philip, in a low tone, and as if addressing himself, "he has ever been my most bitter enemy."

"I speak not of his attempt to persuade your grandfather to place himself on the Spanish throne, or of his unjustifiable seizure of the regency. I speak only of his audacity in violating the sanctity of private life! Did he not call one of your august sisters, the Duchess of Bourbon (I blush as I repeat the insolence) a wine cask? And has he not spoken of the other, the Princess of Conti, in terms with which I will not offend your Majesty's ear?"

"Did he, did the scoundrel say all this? How I hate him!"

"So do I," said the Cardinal, in a voice which left no doubt of the sincerity of the assertion. "And yet, but for your Majesty's too Christian forgiveness of injuries, how easily might these slanders be avenged!"

"You think so?"

"I do. Heaven has given you all the qualities necessary to greatness. You are

brave—does not the world speak of your actions at the battle of Luzzara?"

"Ah, what a day! I was fifteen hours in the saddle. How tired I was!" And the king stretched his limbs and yawned, as if once more exhausted by the very recollection.

"Then, your Majesty is the mightiest monarch upon earth. What sovereign has so many kingdoms? Are you not the king of Navarre and of Arragon, of Valencia and of Toledo, of Murcia, of Granada and of Jaen, of Cordova and of Seville, of Galicia and Leon, and Majorca and Minorca, and Castile and Jerusalem. Are not Naples, and Sardinia, and Sicily, all rightly subject to your sway? Are you not, too, Duke of Milan, and Count of Barcelona, and Lord of Biscay; and have you not in Mexico, and Peru, and the New World, a larger territory than all Europe, with mines of gold and silver, that make you richer than its greatest potentates?"

"Yes, yes," said Philip, "I am a great king," and his eye sparkled for an instant with pleasure at the enumeration of his honours,

but the excitement was but momentary, and, as if fatigued by listening to the catalogue, he once more sunk back among the cushions.

"Yes," said the Cardinal, as he marked the king's cheeks flush, "you are a great monarch; but the territories your Majesty possesses are but the means of procuring for you still more extensive dominions. Your Majesty is descended from a race that sits upon the throne of Charlemagne. You have the beauty, the talents, the ambition, of the great conqueror—why should you not possess his empire?"

"Why not?" said the young king, as his cheek once more coloured with pleasure, and he half-raised himself from his lounging attitude, and rubbed his hands.

"You would be the redoubted master of the world."

"I should like that. It would be worth being a king if everybody trembled when they spoke to me."

"And the attainment of your Majesty's wishes is not difficult. You have already one half of Italy—you will conquer the

remainder. You are justly the Regent of France—you will displace your unprincipled cousin, and be its master:—its real master," continued the wily priest, in a lower tone, "for I am told that your nephew will not live. It is not a month since he had fits, and was so ill that they had actually prepared the viaticum. Then your Majesty will conquer Holland; and by putting the Stuarts again on the English throne, you will, in fact, have in that country a viceroy, who must obey your orders, for he cannot exist without your aid. Then, Sire, you will be a king, indeed —no, not a king, but an emperor—mightier even than your mighty predecessor. And the historians of future centuries will forget the glories of the great Charles in commemorating the glories of the still greater Philip."

Alberoni had at length succeeded in arousing the attention of his master. In the first instance, the king's eye had been languid, and his cheek pale; but as the enumeration of his future dignities proceeded, he at length caught the enthusiasm of the speaker,

and flushed and almost breathless with excitement, he listened with undisguised pleasure to the gorgeous descriptions of his companion.

"And why," said he, as soon as the Cardinal had concluded, "if I can be all this, why am I not all this? And for what purpose, and to what end, have I a minister who can plan and cannot execute?"

"Alas! your Majesty ties my hands!"

"I!" said the king, in astonishment.

"Yes, Sire. Even you."

"I cannot comprehend it."

"Then may I be permitted to explain?"

Philip gave a sign of assent.

"When your royal ancestors to the north and south of the Pyrenees, Louis XIII. and the Emperor came to their thrones, they had extensive kingdoms and but little power. Why?"

"I confess, Alberoni, I have never considered the subject, so you may tell me."

"Sire, France and Spain were alike divided into numerous minute principalities, whose sovereigns, the great nobles, instead of sup-

porting their royal masters, were invariably occupied in plots, conspiracies, and rebellions, for the purpose of thwarting them; and the monarchs of two extensive kingdoms were powerless abroad, from being perpetually engaged in combating disaffection at home."

"Well?"

"The evil, as your Majesty sees, was a radical one, but your ancestors each possessed a minister who had a powerful will, and a knowledge of ancient history."

"What had that to do with the matter?" said Philip. "I can understand the benefits arising from their strong will, but what ancient history had in common with Richelieu and Ximenes, is, I confess, beyond me."

"Sire, it suggested to them a principle. The strong will but gave them the means of carrying it into effect."

Philip shook his head, as if still puzzled.

"Nay, I have but to allude to the passage, and your Majesty's happy memory will at once recall it and see its application. Tarquinius Superbus had in his neighbourhood

a town, which (like your Majesty's city of Barcelona) was a constant subject of annoyance to the royal authorities. His son, Sextus, could not rule it. He asked for advice. The old king took the messenger into the garden, and with his cane——"

"I remember, now," said Philip, eagerly; "he knocked off the heads of all the poppies."

"No, Sire; not of all—only of the tallest ones. Only of those that approached to himself in height—that aped the king."

"And what, in the name of heaven! had this to do with Richelieu or Ximenes?"

"They took the hint, Sire, and adopted the principle. They, too, were conscious that the weakness of the sovereign arose from the power of the great nobles; and, like the Roman, they crushed the evil by removing the cause of it."

The king said nothing.

"And what," continued the Cardinal, "was the auspicious result? Your two ancestors, who had commenced life as petty princes, saw themselves, at its close, the

mightiest potentates of Europe, and the arbiters of its destinies; and such would I have your Majesty."

"And such would I be! But where is the obstacle to my greatness?"

"Need I speak it? From the laxity of the last three reigns, Spain has once more become what it was in the early days of the emperor. It is tyrannised over by a hundred petty despots, who call themselves your subjects, but are, in fact, your masters."

"Stop, Alberoni," said Philip, hurriedly, and with a flushed cheek; "this is too insolent!"

"If your Majesty take amiss the zeal of your servant, he will be silent. He has but for his consolation the knowledge that he has spoken the truth."

"And where is the proof of such intention to resist my authority?"

"Does it not more or less exhibit itself daily? Why, it is scarce twelve months since the Dukes of Veraguas and Las Torres entered into a plot to seize your Majesty's person and place the Prince of Asturias on

the throne. Out of your too great magnanimity, you pardoned them, and what has been the result of your clemency? Why, here we have a fresh plot at the palace of Escalona, at which he and some other grandees meet together for equally treasonable purposes."

"No, no, Alberoni. They did not threaten *me!* Your Eminence was the mark they aimed at."

The Cardinal started with surprise, but he instantly recovered himself.

"On the contrary," said he; "I have to assure your Majesty that a direct proposal was made for the seizure, not of so insignificant a being as myself, but of your sacred person."

"Are you well advised of that?"

"I will prove it."

"You will prove it you say, but when?"

"When the Duke of Escalona is brought to trial."

Philip seemed violently agitated. He rose from his seat, and paced the room with hurried steps. Suddenly he stopped, and once

more threw himself into the fauteuil, changing his place repeatedly, and fingering, nervously, at intervals, its cushions.

"Alberoni," said he, at length, "the Grand Chamberlain is my old and faithful subject."

"He was, Sire. He is so no longer."

"He has done me in his day good service."

"Therein he did but his duty, and a mere discharge of duty demands no gratitude."

"And would you," said the king, in a low, agitated tone, "would you condemn him on mere report?"

"I am his accuser, Sire, not his judge. It is only the Council of Castile which can decide on his guilt or its punishment."

"But you seem to have a personal enmity to the man?"

"Pardon me, Sire; you forget that I am a churchman, and that my holy calling permits not my mind to be affected by the feelings common to frail humanity."

"But he is my friend."

"Kings can have no friendship with traitors. They have only duties."

"And what do you say are mine?"

"Heaven has made you the sovereign of this country, the embodiment of the idea of its government, and government is to a nation not a blessing, but a curse, unless it can make its authority respected; and it ceases to be respected if evil men are permitted to plot against it with impunity."

Philip once more fidgeted, and grasped convulsively the arms of his seat.

"Sire," said Alberoni, "to a heart so affectionate as yours all acts of justice must be painful, for to one party, at least, justice ever implies punishment; but you will not hesitate, for you have before you the brilliant example of your predecessor?"

"Of whom speak you?"

"Of Louis XIII. The Marquis of Cinq Mars was his most intimate friend, but the King of France did not hesitate to sign his death-warrant when he plotted treason against the state."

"This necessity for punishing is a cruel one."

"It is not the less a necessity."

Philip said nothing.

"In this," continued the Cardinal, "your royal ancestor exhibited a signal example of self sacrifice, for he forgot his own private affections in his zeal for the discharge of his duty."

There was a silence for some minutes. The king evidently became more and more agitated. He spoke at length, but in a low faint tone. "And you would put the old man to death?"

"Heaven forbid!" said the Cardinal, with well-acted horror. "I would but bring him to trial before the Council of Castile."

"And in the meantime you will do him no injury?"

"None. I swear to your Majesty, by the Holy Virgin of Atocha—none!"

"But I had resolved on giving him his freedom."

"Your Majesty decided under a miscon-

ception. You had had the facts carefully concealed from you. You did not then know that the duke was a traitor."

"But I have promised, on my kingly word, his liberty to his daughter."

"*Ecclesia absolvet.* Holy Church has the power to bind and to loose. I release you from the pledge."

Philip groaned aloud, and bending forward, buried his face in his hands.

The Cardinal affected not to see the embarrassment of his companion.

"Then I have," continued he, after a pause, "your Majesty's permission to impeach the duke for high treason before the Council of Castile?"

"If it must be so, it must, Alberoni," said Philip. "I consent; but I need not say with what pain."

"Nevertheless, Sire, it is a duty, and you will not hesitate to discharge it. Your conscience will repay you for the sacrifice, and to one so justly celebrated for his devotion as your Majesty, what happiness is so great as that conferred by conscience!"

The Cardinal retired as he spoke, and the king, once more, hurried to the altar in the corner of the room, and, flinging himself on his knees before it, wept.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### EXPLANATIONS.

On the following morning Therese was informed by the faithful La Roche of the sad change which had taken place in the sentiments of the king. She had received, too, from the same source, the more startling intelligence of the intention of the Cardinal to bring the duke to trial before the Council of Castile, for the quick-witted valet had contrived to extract from his master all the concessions made to the minister, and he had hastened to report them to the young heiress of the Grand Chamberlain.

The news filled her with dismay. She

had lived too long in Spain not to be aware of the venality of justice in a country, where, to be charged with an offence by a powerful opponent, was considered sufficient evidence of guilt. It was true the members of the Council were men of high rank, but the Spaniards of all classes have inherited from the Arab their greed for gold as well as their indisposition to labour. All, with scarce an exception, were willing to be bribed, and the only difference in the would-be recipients of the bounty, was the amount of the money to be offered for their purchase. It was the power of gratifying this avarice that made Alberoni dangerous. Had he been merely unscrupulous, he might have been defied; but he had at his command the wealth of the monarchy, and was ready to lavish it on judge or official if obedient to his wishes. All this the young girl knew, and the knowledge made her tremble, for she felt that for her grandfather to be brought to trial by such a man, and before such a tribunal, was equivalent to his condemnation.

There were other causes of disquietude. Donna Teresa was aware that the present calamities of her house had originated in the hostility of the duke to the Cardinal, and she could not help feeling conscious that for this violent enmity, she was herself in some degree to blame. If she had not originated the prejudices of the old noble, she had, at least, given them additional force, by her counsels and her sympathy. But it may not be amiss to pause for a moment for the purpose of detailing her history, and showing how it was that so young a creature had been mixed up with intrigues, at once so important and so little in common with the tastes or habits of her age and sex.

Her father was the Count of Gormas, the eldest son of the Duke of Escalona. Her mother, a sister of the Prince of Chalais, was the niece of the Princess of Ursins, and had followed her to Madrid. The Camerera Mayor, for many years, was, in fact, the mistress of the kingdom of Philip V., and she had naturally done her best to

exhibit the attractions of her relative to advantage, and surround her with the young men who were reputed to be the best matches in Spain. Amongst these was the Count of Gormas. He became fascinated by the attractions of the fair stranger, and wooed and won her.

Donna Teresa was the only produce of the marriage, and had received an education such as at that time few of her country-women enjoyed. In the latter part of the reign of Louis XIV., the Court of France was the most accomplished in Europe, and was even less distinguished by the genius of its men than the brilliancy of its women. The rule of Madame de Maintenon, who had passed middle life when she attracted the attentions of the Grand Monarque, and who, even in youth, had never been handsome, was, in fact, the rule of a powerful and educated mind. It was her intelligence and the charms of her conversation that made her rival successfully the beauty of La Vallière, the dignity of Madame Soubize, the tender prudery of the Duchess of Roque-

laure, and the wit of all the Mortemars. The unacknowledged Queen of France was conscious of her power and proud of it, and she endeavoured to perpetuate its influence and memory by giving to the younger of her own sex accomplishments similar to those which had made herself a sovereign. She established the school of St. Cyr.

Amongst the juvenile ladies of noble family, who were fortunate enough to be admitted to it, was Adéle de Chalais. She was clever and ambitious, and availed herself eagerly of its advantages. A few years saw her one of the most distinguished of its members, and with a mind well stored with everything that study could confer.

But though a school can give book-learning, it can give nothing more. To make man or woman powerful in society, a knowledge of society is requisite, and this, her great relative the Princess of Ursins, supplied. The Camerera Mayor was what the French call a *maîtresse femme*, and under her auspices the young lady received all that practical information which was wanting to

make perfect the more vague studies of her childhood.

The Countess of Gormas did not discard her accomplishments with her marriage; she devoted them to the instruction of her daughter, and Therese, under her mother's auspices became that *rara avis* in Spain—a well-informed woman. With her mother's talents she had inherited something of the high spirit and unbending character of her father's family, and when, upon the death of both her parents, she became her grandfather's solitary descendant, she gradually, partly by her amiable character, and partly by the charms of her mind, became, not only his idol, but his companion. By degrees, the mutual affection of age and youth ripened into confidence. By degrees the girl became the depository of the old man's hopes—his wishes—his fears—his prejudices and his discontent—his loyalty to the king—his hatred of Alberoni.

The consequence of all this was, that his juvenile counsellor had suggested to the Grand Chamberlain employing the influence

of Anne de la Tremouille with Philip, for the purpose of effecting the dismissal of the Cardinal. The advice was adopted; but as in the complicated arrangements consequent on a matter so delicate, and with an enemy so unscrupulous, it was dangerous to trust even to private letters or special couriers, it was decided that the young lady herself should go to Paris and see her relative in person. The plan was carried into effect. Therese joined Madame des Ursins in the French capital, but alone, for she had left her attendants at Bayonne; and thither, immediately after their arrival, had been sent back the duenna by an order to that effect from the Duke of Escalona. Anne de la Tremouille lived under a feigned name, and her grand-niece, for the purpose of better aiding her concealment and baffling the spies of the Cardinal, assumed her mother's designation of Mademoiselle de Chalais. In such companionship it may easily be understood that the young lady entered more eagerly than ever into the schemes for the overthrow of the Spanish prime

minister; and on Madame des Ursins refusing positively to return to Madrid, had undertaken, herself, to conduct the details of the plot, provided she were furnished with a political subordinate of the other sex. Several names had been recommended to her as of men qualified for the office, but, in concert with her aged kinswoman, she had rejected all, and had chosen Colonel Clifford for her coadjutor.

There were reasons with both ladies for this. We have already mentioned that Lord Clifford, before he succeeded to the title, had married, at Madrid, a Spanish woman of rank, who had enjoyed the intimacy of the Camerera Mayor, and that of this union, Charles Clifford was the second son. By the elder of the petticoated Machiavels, (for both Lord Stanhope and Dubois gave implicit obedience to her wishes,) the young soldier had been selected for the diplomatic appointment, from her own memory of the boy's high spirit, his intimate acquaintance with the Spanish language, and more especially that passion for frolic which had been

the subject of many complaints in the confidential letters of his mother to Madame des Ursins. But the pranks that terrified the parent, formed a subject of unqualified pleasure to her correspondent. The passion of the lad for mixing in every class of society in Madrid—to-day as an hidalgo, to-morrow as a water-carrier, now as a gipsy, and now as a contrabandista—served to prove alike the adventurous spirit of the young Englishman, and his power of supporting with success every variety of character. And it was for these reasons that the aged friend of Mrs. Clifford recommended her son to Lord Stanhope for a mission, the success of which so much depended on the envoy being able to assume the manners, and be mistaken for one of the people among whom he was to mix.

Her companion's reasons for concurring in the selection, were different. Clifford's mother had been a Zuniga. So also was the mother of the Duke of Escalona, and of course the great-grandmamma of the young lady who had now undertaken to overturn

a ministry; and as in the plot in which she was about to be engaged, Therese felt she must necessarily be thrown much into the society of her fellow-actor, her natural delicacy revolted against forming a sudden intimacy with a stranger. The same objection did not apply to Clifford. She had never seen him it was true, but he was her relative, a cousin—no doubt a distant one —but still a cousin. The word is one dear to female lips. It has a thousand meanings. To the secret thought it may represent a friend, a confidant, a lover; but the idea clothes itself in the most legitimate guise of conventional phraseology. Whatever be the quantum of affection secretly lavished on the favoured mortal, its outward symbol at least gives no sign of it. From the lips of frozen age, as from those of impassioned womanhood, comes alike the phrase at once so eloquent and so undemonstrative, "It is only a cousin."

There were, perchance, other causes for the preference. During the year which Therese had passed in Paris, she had lived

with the Princess of Ursins, and with the exception of some few brilliant court ceremonials, that lady had been her sole companion; for the success of their joint plot depended upon secresy, and secresy in its turn required seclusion. They were thus thrown much upon one another's society, and passed the long days and evenings in gossip. In this, Madame des Ursins played the principal part. Her agitated life as Madame de Talleyrand, her gorgeous existence as the Duchess of Bracciano, and most of all her brilliant career in Spain, during twelve long years, supplied her with a thousand delightful recollections. But most of all and naturally did her reminiscences cling to Madrid, with its motley population, and the romance and perpetual masquerade of its society. And often would she tell with a laughing eye of the maternal disquietudes of Mrs. Clifford, and read passages from the carefully-preserved letters, of the perpetual scrapes and frolics of her harum-scarum son.

Therese was fascinated. Girls detest well-

behaved boys. The young gentlemen who never tear their clothes, or wet their stockings, or break windows, or are too late for meals, may be the delight of their adoring mammas, but they are held in unspeakable contempt by the little damsels of their own age, who lavish their affections upon ragged urchins who are ever risking their necks after birds' nests, or breaking into orchards, or getting what belongs to them of the human face divine made into a sort of mosaic through the medium of the agency of the fists of their fellows. The passion of girls for pickledom, in their male associates, does not end with their childhood. Mrs. Clifford, when she wrote of the peccadillos of her youngest boy, groaned in spirit. The dark-eyed heiress, as she listened to the narrative from the lips of Madame des Ursins, decided that the hero of the anathematised exploits must be a charming fellow.

The favourable feeling became strengthened by indulgence, and at length bore its fruit. We are little acquainted with female hearts, but we suspect that if some who

knew them better had probed that of the fair Spaniard, they would have discovered that the young colonel's masquerading exploits at Madrid formed no contemptible portion of the reasons for her giving her zealous sanction to the suggestion of Madame des Ursins, that he should be selected as her coadjutor in the plot, which was hatching for the destruction of the Cardinal. It may appear but small ground for the choice of a diplomatic agent; but if the early history of one of those great statesmen, who, within the last thirty years has passed from the stage, were laid open, it would be found that he was indebted for his first step in political life to predilections resting on causes still more extraordinary.

In the meantime the Princess of Ursins had woven the different threads of her plot into a continuous web. She was, in fact, the master workman that gave to it strength and consistency. Her hatred of Alberoni had naturally suggested the idea of his downfall, and her eminent talents, her intimate acquaintance with Spain, and more especially

her interest with many of its leading nobles, had, of all others, fitted her for effecting it. Of this fact Stanhope and Dubois, the British and French ministers, were well aware, and instead of devising anything themselves, they had been contented to adopt the plans and obey the wishes of the female Machiavel. These were now ready, and the princess gave instructions to her young relative to prepare to return to Spain. But as it was important alike that she should be able to assist the envoy selected by Stanhope for the private mission, and be acquainted with his appearance, Madame des Ursins instructed Dubois to bring the young soldier to her lodgings in the Marais; and there behind a screen he was paraded before herself and the youthful heiress. The next matter was to secure his safe arrival at Madrid. The disguise of the contrabandista might do something, but that was not considered sufficient, and to aid his progress Perez was ordered to Irun.

The history of the Gitano is already known. The brother of Don Ambrosio, a dissolute noble of Andalusia, had done vio-

lence to a gipsy girl, and Perez, her brother, slew him. The family of the dead, had the Gitano seized and brought before a court of justice. As justice is, and was, administered in Spain, the fate of the prisoner seemed inevitable, when Donna Teresa took up his cause. She had seen the girl, had purchased from her articles of female adornment, and upon learning her sad story, induced her grandfather to interest himself in Perez's behalf. The face of affairs changed at once. The house of Pacheco was more powerful than that of Pimental, and, as a matter of course, its protegé was pronounced to have acted on sufficient provocation; and was set free.

From that day the gipsey tribe became the slaves of Donna Teresa. Most of all, Perez devoted himself to her service; and when it was decided that Clifford should go to Madrid, a sum of money had been sent him, with instructions to assume the dress of an arriero, to purchase three of the finest mules which could be got, and to wait at

Irun with the animals as if on the look out for a job.

To prevent his being hired by any chance traveller, he had orders to ask a price so extravagant for the use of his beasts as to prevent all risk of their being employed. He was furthermore instructed, that when the party for whose service he was really intended had arrived, he should be informed of the fact by Donna Teresa's holding up her fore finger, and drawing it across her mouth. As to the young lady herself, he received the most positive injunctions to affect an utter ignorance of her person, name, family, and connexions. The story will now explain itself; and the reader will comprehend Perez's indifference to Clifford's offers in the first instance, and his after eager acceptance of them. He will understand, too, the intense interest that the Gitano took in the motions of Don Ambrosio, and his anxiety to save his benefactress at the Somo Sierra. He it was who had uttered the cry of the owl under the young lady's windows at

Buitrago, and had ordered his tribe to seize Clifford in the neighbourhood of the Moorish Tower.

The object of the friendly violence was simple enough. An under official of the government at Madrid had been gained by the Princess of Ursins. He was well paid, and despatched from time to time any intelligence which he thought might be interesting to his patroness. The couriers employed were gipsies of Perez's tribe, and they had instructions to meet the young heiress on fixed days, and at certain points of the road. Buitrago was one of the rendezvous. Therese had heard something of her grandfather's increasing discontent. She dreaded an explosion. She was anxiously expecting her messenger when Clifford surprised her on the balcony; and she had asked him to her room as much for the purpose of removing him out of Perez's way as for any other.

The expected courier came, and brought important despatches—the announcement of Alberoni's suspicions of the real character of the contrabandista, and the instructions to

seize him at the city gate, and deprive him of the documents which were necessary to the success of his diplomacy. At first Therese had intended disclosing to him his danger, but the idea was discarded almost at once. She felt that to win belief from the young soldier, she must give him full explanations, not only of the object of his mission, but of the part which she herself had acted in getting him appointed to it. But this delicacy forbade. Had the crisis occurred in the early part of the journey, she might have mustered up courage for the effort; but of late, and more especially since the adventure of the Somo Sierra, new feelings had sprung up scarce intelligible perhaps to herself, but which made her crimson with confusion at the thought of confessing to her young companion that for weeks, nay, months, he had been the object of her thoughts and her plans. So long, in short, as she was perfectly indifferent to him, she cared nothing about his suspecting her of affection; but the idea of such a suspicion became intolerable the moment the affection

existed in reality. Such are the mental vagaries of the daughters of Eve.

What followed may easily be guessed at. Perez, in obedience to her instructions, had called in the aid of his tribe, and Clifford was seized in the manner which we have already related, and carried to an old castle, a favourite haunt of the gipsy mauraders. Before leaving Paris, Therese had been made acquainted by Dubois with the documents intrusted to the young Englishman, and more especially with the mode in which he was instructed to conceal them. She was thus able to give to the Gitano the information which at once led to their discovery. But she feared entrusting them to strange hands. The documents were of importance, nay, were absolutely necessary to the success of the plot, for they contained the bills of exchange, and the letters of credence to Scotti, to the confessor, and to the queen. The gipsies might lose them; might be tempted by their evident value to offer them for sale to an employé of the government; or, supposing their fidelity was proof against

temptation, might be deprived of them by any officer of police, who might choose to immortalize himself by the extraordinary freak of enforcing for once the laws of the country; and these, of late, had been made of extreme severity against the swarthy-faced vagabonds.

She determined, therefore, to take charge of them herself. With her they would be safe, for, at the gates of Madrid, a lady could not be an object of suspicion, and her luggage would be unsearched. Upon this decision she had acted, and had awaited in the neighbourhood of the ruin itself the success of her plans. There accordingly she received from Perez the valuable documents, as chanced to be witnessed from the top of the tower by her unfortunate captive, and had then made her way to the inn, about a league distant, which was to be her quarters for the night.

On the following morning she had continued her journey to Madrid, and before Clifford arrived, had transmitted the abstracted papers to his apartment in the Calle

de la Cabeza, with whose existence also, and the name of whose landlord, she had been entrusted by Dubois.

So far all had gone well. She herself, and her coadjutor in the plot, were both safe in the capital. But now began difficulties which she had not anticipated. The Duke of Escalona had eagerly awaited the presence of the Princess of Ursins in Madrid, as his assistant in the conspiracy against the Cardinal. It may be easily imagined how bitter was his disappointment when he learned from his granddaughter on her arrival, the refusal of Anne de la Tremouille to leave France.

It was in vain that the fair diplomatist had attempted to diminish his regrets, by informing him of the selection of an English envoy to replace Madame des Ursins, and his being accredited by the prime minister of France and the ambassador of England. The bigoted old noble loved neither country. He detested the English, for they had been the main support of the Austrian competitor for the throne; while he himself had been one of

the earliest and most zealous adherents of the Bourbon dynasty. His hatred of France was not less strong. Dubois was prime minister of the Duke of Orleans, and the Duke of Orleans had made himself regent in spite of the better claims of the Spanish king. Besides, as he justly remarked, the exertions of the grandees might be considered as patriotic and national so long as they were unaided, or aided only by the Princess of Ursins, who from her having for twelve years exercised supreme power in the Peninsula, was considered a countrywoman; but that the admission of a stranger to a share in their councils, or their acts, might give them a different character. He declined, therefore, all assistance at the hands of the new comer, and spoke with so much violence, that the young girl did not dare again to introduce the subject, and still less to tell of the adventure of the Somo Sierra, or of the feelings of gratitude which had sprung up in consequence of it.

Her vexations did not end here. The fierce old man had for twelve long months with ill-

enduring patience brooded over his wrongs, in the hope that the arrival of the Princess of Ursins would enable him to overthrow the minister, and obtain their redress. With that hope vanished his forbearance. He lost all self-control, attacked Alberoni with his stick in the king's presence, and two days after summoned to his palace those of the grandees whom he knew to be as determined in their dislike to the favourite as himself.

With the unhappy issue of the meeting our readers are already acquainted. The day was one of evil fortune to all parties, for Clifford too was its victim, by following Therese from the street to her father's house. The young lady's reasons for avoiding him were simple. She knew not how to treat him. He had saved her life, and more than her life, and he had therefore a claim upon her gratitude. If he had been old, or ugly, or disagreeable, she would have had no difficulty in acknowledging it. But it was dangerous to confess the obligation, to one who had already taken firm hold of her imagination, and whose power over her she felt

would be increased by every succeeding interview. To think of loving him was madness; for her grandfather's prejudices had become from age and disappointment more violent than ever. To see him, without loving him, was impossible. She decided, therefore, upon carefully concealing herself till he had left Madrid, or, if she did venture forth, to do so only at the time of the siesta, when the streets were deserted, and she believed her motions likely to be unobserved.

The plan was well arranged, but she forgot that the same necessity for caution would naturally suggest to the young envoy, the same hour for his wanderings. It had been so, and in spite of herself they had met. The reader has learned the unhappy results of the tête-à-tête—the discovery of the would-be contrabandista—his seizure—his escape from the grand chamberlain, only to be sent into captivity by the prime minister.

In all this there was much reason for wretchedness; for however involuntarily on her own part, she could not help looking upon herself, in some degree, as the cause of

the double calamity. In one matter only was there consolation. The catastrophe had, at least, broken the web of mystery which had wound itself round her, and which had been of late so hateful. There was no longer need for concealment between herself and her cousin. That was one thing to be thankful for. There was another result of the misfortune for which she was still more grateful; it had made her grandfather acquainted with the person of his new relative. Nay, more, it might be from the gallant conduct of her lover in the moment of trial—it might be from other reasons—but whatever were the cause, the young girl could not help feeling that the duke had lost much of his prejudice with regard to the companion of her journey; nay, she sometimes fancied looked upon him with the eye of favour. Thus, though there was much misery, still, even in the sorrow there were gleams of sunshine; and notwithstanding the general gloom of the horizon, it was with feelings hopeful of a brighter future, that Therese

once more took the road to the ancient fortress, which was now the dungeon of her grandfather, and of one, whom she could not help confessing to herself, was scarcely less dear to her.

END OF VOL. II.

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